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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

### **CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE AND THE FALKLAND ISLANDS CONFLICT**

by

Troy J. Beattie

March 2010

Co-Advisors:

James Russell  
Daniel Moran

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**CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE AND  
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS CONFLICT**

Troy J. Beattie  
Major, United States Army  
B.A., University of California, Santa Cruz, 1994

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
March 2010**

Author: Troy J. Beattie

Approved by: James Russell  
Co-Advisor

Daniel Moran  
Co-Advisor

Harold A. Trinkunas, PhD  
Chairman, Department of National Security Affairs

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## **ABSTRACT**

Conventional deterrence failed to prevent open warfare between Britain and Argentina over the Falkland Islands sovereignty issue. This thesis investigates the basic principles underlying conventional deterrence, and then applies those principles to the case study of the Falkland Islands conflict in order to discover why. This is accomplished by examining British political and military planning for the South Atlantic region from 1965–1982 for its ability to leverage effective deterrent threats against Argentina. Psychological factors concerning the rational actor model and their impact upon Britain's capacity to issue deterrent threats against Argentina are also discussed. These two factors are then used to analyze Britain's credibility and reputation in the South Atlantic Region and their effects upon Britain's deterrence posture. All these factors are then taken into account when analyzing the cost/benefit calculus of both Britain and Argentina. Thus, Britain's political and military planning, combined with severe psychological limitations, decreased its regional credibility and reputation, which severely undercut its ability to affect Argentina's cost/benefit analysis. This is why conventional deterrence failed in the Falkland Islands conflict.



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## I. RELEVANCE OF CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

*Si vis pacem, para bellum (If you wish for peace, prepare for war.)<sup>1</sup>*

The end of the Cold War brought about numerous changes in the structure and functioning of the international system. During the Cold War, one of the major debates concerned the relative stability of a bipolar world. After the Cold War, the debate shifted to the stability of a multi-polar world. This stance gradually morphed to emphasize a uni-polar world in which the United States was the leading hegemon. After 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the discussion once again returned to the relative merits of stability and security within a multi-polar world.

These continual shifts in power relationships change within the international community have also required a reassessment of the role of deterrence within it. During the Cold War, deterrence was considered primarily connection with nuclear weapons and the threat posed by the Soviet Union. After the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, nuclear deterrence lost its centrality due to the lack of a global nuclear threat. The primary concern of international security became the issue of how to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction on the one hand, and the suppression of regional conflict on the other.

After 9/11, many policy makers and political scientists believed that deterrence was no longer a necessary or a viable component of national security strategy in the post Cold War. The 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS 2002) released by the Bush Administration reflected these doubts. The report stated that during the Cold War the United States faced a “status quo oriented and risk averse [enemy; thus] deterrence was an effective defense” against it.<sup>2</sup> The NSS 2002 further elaborated that the international

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in: Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>2</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: White House [2002]), [http://www.acq.osd.mil/ncbdp/nm/docs/Relevant%20Docs/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/ncbdp/nm/docs/Relevant%20Docs/national_security_strategy.pdf) (accessed 8/16/2009).

system had “profoundly changed”<sup>3</sup> enough after the end of the Cold War that deterrence was no longer effective against rogue states and adversaries who were less risk averse and not susceptible to deterrence.<sup>4</sup> To be sure, doubts about the viability of deterrence are not new. There are numerous historical episodes that support this belief. Despite the fact that a war did not break out between the United States and the Soviet Union (deterrence success), various destabilizing regional conventional wars did occur during the Cold War (deterrence failure.) Some of these regional wars were Korea (1950), American involvement in Indochina (1960s–1975), the Suez Crisis of 1956, the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the Turkish Invasion of Cyprus (1974), the Falkland Islands War (1982), and the Iran/Iraq War (1980–1988).

## **A. RESEARCH QUESTION**

The issue of deterrence, especially conventional deterrence, remains relevant in today’s security environment. Conventional deterrence needs to be reexamined as a tool of U.S. national strategy, foreign policy, and military doctrine given that President Obama has publicly advocated nuclear disarmament. President Obama’s emphasis on nuclear disarmament further reinforces the need to examine and understand the viability of conventional deterrence as an instrument of national security strategy.

In order to ascertain the viability of conventional deterrence, it is helpful to return to the numerous small regional wars that occurred during the Cold War and establish the role that conventional deterrence played leading up to the fighting that occurred then. Since conventional deterrence takes for granted that the nuclear threat is not necessary to affect the cost/ benefit analysis of an opponent, one must examine the small regional wars in which nuclear weapons did not play a role or consideration in the conflict.

In order to direct and set researchable boundaries, the major research question this thesis focuses upon is: “Why was conventional deterrence unable to prevent interstate armed conflict during the Cold War; and, what lessons can be learned from conventional deterrence failures?” In answering this question, the following hypothesis is proposed:

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<sup>3</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: White House [2002]).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

“Deterrence did not prevent regional conventional wars and conflicts because the deterrer failed to present credible threats that could be used to manipulate the opponent’s behavior, activities, cost/ benefit analysis, and instill a fear of unacceptable losses.”

The Falkland Islands War (1982) is especially well suited as a test of this hypothesis. The war was a regional conflict that involved a major member of the Western alliance and a rising regional power, who fought each other for control over a small set of islands. Among the conventional conflicts that punctuated the Cold War, the Falklands War offers the advantage, from the point of view of studying conventional deterrence, of having been fought between two opponents with no prospect of further intervention, nor with any likelihood that the conflict might escalate dramatically beyond its original dimensions. These characteristics allow for a more precise analysis of the factors underpinning conventional deterrence without having to consider a third party’s deterrence attempts. Additionally, although one of the belligerents in the war possessed nuclear weapons, there were no conceivable circumstances in which their use would have been considered. This also enables the analysis focus to be solely upon conventional deterrence.

## **B. THESIS FRAMEWORK**

This thesis will be broken down into six parts. Chapter II will conduct a literature review of theoretical literature on conventional deterrence as tools for assessing the deterrence failure that led to the Falklands War. Chapter III will describe the historical context that led to conflict between Britain and Argentina. Chapter IV examines the political and military conditions that were obviously intended to avert war, but did not. . It claims that Britain did not hold a firm position towards the South Atlantic Region; thus it could not create, plan, or leverage threats in the form of flexible deterrent options, both politically and militarily, in order to deter Argentine aggressiveness. Chapter V discusses the psychological factors at play in the decisions by both sides to use force. It asserts that psychological factors based upon the rational actor model prevented Britain from formulating a coherent policy and military posture that could threaten Argentina from taking unwanted actions. Chapter VI covers the concepts of credibility and reputation



within conventional deterrence. It argues that Britain's unclear policy and military capabilities created doubt within Argentina about Britain's ability to threaten, thwart, and deter its plans for taking over the islands. Finally, Chapter VII analyzes the cost/ benefit calculus behind deterrence failure in the Falkland Islands. It argues that Britain's ambivalence to the South Atlantic region failed to demonstrate to Argentina that the costs of invading the Falkland Islands far outweighed the benefits Argentina could expect to reap by going to war.

## II. CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

*States have neither permanent friends nor permanent enemies, just permanent interests.*

Lord Palmerston<sup>5</sup>

This thesis seeks to understand deterrence in general and conventional deterrence in particular. In order to answer the question posed in Chapter I, “Why was conventional deterrence unable to prevent interstate armed conflict during the Cold War; and, what lessons can be learned from conventional deterrence failures?;” one must first determine what deterrence is. Only then, can it be broken down by its principle components and tested against the hypothesis proposed in Chapter I by using the case study of the Falkland Islands War.

This chapter will conduct a brief review of the concept of conventional deterrence. The first section will cover the various definitions, types, and requirements for deterrence. The second section will discuss the interaction and role of policy and the military in deterrence. The third segment will talk about the psychological factors in conventional deterrence. The fourth section will cover the various aspects of reputation and credibility within deterrence. The fifth and final section of this review will discuss the cost/ benefit calculations of the decision maker.

### A. DETERRENCE DEFINITIONS

A large subset of literature on international relations is the study of conflict and deterrence. Oliver Ramsbotham defined conflict in the following way: “It is an expression of the heterogeneity of interests, values, and beliefs that arise as new formations generated by social change come up against inherited constraints.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, conflict arises as one party wants to change the status quo and the other party

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<sup>5</sup> As quoted in: Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela R. Aall, *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World* (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 25.

<sup>6</sup> Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2005), 13.

resists the change. Deterrence is a means to resist that change. One presumption about deterrence is that a state or states can avoid war indefinitely.<sup>7</sup> However, as will be demonstrated throughout this literature review and the larger overall project, deterrence is difficult establish and maintain indefinitely.

## **1. Definitions**

Deterrence theory seeks to identify the underlying principles that govern deterrence as a strategy.<sup>8</sup> It is expected to describe, explain, and prescribe government behavior in order to secure a desired outcome.<sup>9</sup> Nuclear and conventional deterrence aim to accomplish the same task, just by a different means. Lawrence Freedman described deterrence as being “concerned with deliberate attempts to manipulate the behavior of others through conditional threats.”<sup>10</sup> This is generally accomplished either by threatening to deny an adversary any hope of achieving his objectives, or of punishing him severely for attempting to do so. Patrick Morgan refined the concept of deterrence by punishment when he wrote that “the essence of deterrence is that one party prevents another from doing something the first party does not want by threatening to harm the other party seriously if it does.”<sup>11</sup> One of the most commonly accepted methods for manipulating an opponent’s behavior is to affect his “cost/ benefit calculation of taking a given action.”<sup>12</sup> Or more simply put, “deterrence is the generation of fear”<sup>13</sup> within the opponent that he will fail to attain his goals. John Mearsheimer discusses deterrence by denial when he claims that conventional deterrence is “a function of capability of denying an aggressor his battlefield objectives with conventional forces.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, conventional deterrence, whether achieved by punishment or denial, is “ultimately a function of the

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<sup>7</sup> Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 1

<sup>12</sup> Austin G. Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 2008), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>14</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 15.

relationship between the perceived political benefits resulting from military action and a number of nonmilitary as well as military costs and risks.”<sup>15</sup>

The ideas of change and status quo are essential to understanding deterrence. Successful deterrence prevents an opponent’s plan of changing the status quo to his favor.<sup>16</sup> Freedman elaborates on this concept when he states that deterrence during the Cold War became a “doctrine so associated with continuity and the status quo, which occupie[d] a middle ground between appeasement and aggression, [and] celebrate[d] caution above all else.”<sup>17</sup> Given the importance of the status quo, deterrence can be viewed as a theory about behavior that eventually became narrowly focused on preventing military attacks.<sup>18</sup> The means of preventing military attack is to create a state of mind in an opponent of “unacceptable counteraction” due to the existence of a credible threat.<sup>19</sup> The existence of a credible threat is essential to persuading “one’s opponent that the costs and/ or risks of a given course of action he might take outweigh its benefits.”<sup>20</sup> The potential costs of an action are where the split between nuclear and conventional deterrence occurs. Modern conceptions of nuclear deterrence resulted from the capability to threaten existential damage and casualties while leaving the opponents military forces intact.<sup>21</sup> Conventional deterrence necessitates unacceptable losses on the opponent’s military forces.

For the purposes of this thesis, conventional deterrence will be defined as: a policy intended to maintain or improve the status quo relationship through the manipulation of an opponent’s behavior and cost/ benefit calculus to instill a fear of unacceptable losses by the careful application of credible threats. In order to understand deterrence, George and Smoke observed the following simplifications and assumptions

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<sup>15</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 5.

<sup>17</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> As cited in: *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>20</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

about deterrence theory (which became the subjects of future discussions on deterrence theory): 1) states are unitary players/ actors; 2) actors must necessarily be rational; 3) deterrence must have a defined scope; 4) the emphasis of deterrence was placed on military threats; 5) deterrence had a tendency towards binary view of commitments (yes/no); 6) restricted to negative influence of threats versus positive influence of inducements to affect behavior; 7) inattention to deterrent capabilities at all levels of conflict.<sup>22</sup> The issues of scope, visible military threats, and deterrence capabilities all impacted Britain's reaction to Argentine aggressiveness during the 1970s and early 1980s. Some claim that deterrence theory and strategy are overstretched (in terms of scope) beyond what is realistically achievable. Lawrence Freedman is one such person; he states that deterrence "covered allies and became 'extended', it covered potential enemies thus it was 'mutual'. In times of crisis, it was 'immediate'; then it became prolonged and became 'general'. And, it attempted to 'deny' enemy gains through 'punishment'."<sup>23</sup> Although, he believes that deterrence is overstretched, the above quote demonstrates the overall complexity of the international system in which actors apply the various tools of deterrence. Now, that the definitions of deterrence have been refined. One can move on to the discussion about the types of deterrence.

## **2. Types**

There are many different types of deterrence strategies available to states. As alluded to in the previous section, there are two main types of deterrence: deterrence by punishment or by denial<sup>24</sup>. Deterrence by punishment is usually associated with nuclear strategies, while deterrence by denial is usually associated with conventional military capabilities.<sup>25</sup>

Either type of deterrence can exist in basic and extended forms. Basic deterrence is geared towards protecting the territorial integrity of the state and tends to be more

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<sup>22</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 71–82.

<sup>23</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 14–15.

<sup>24</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 14.

<sup>25</sup> T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 8.

inherently credible by virtue of its direct link to the preservation of state sovereignty. Extended deterrence concerns the protection of interests outside of the territorial limits of the state, and is liable to be viewed as less credible<sup>26</sup> because the state itself is not in peril if deterrence fails. Austin Long states that “basic deterrence [is] not rational but credible.”<sup>27</sup> The underlying presumption is that if deterrence fails and the state is attacked, there is a guarantee that the threatened action will occur regardless of the reasons behind the opponent’s actions. Thus, under basic deterrence, a threat is actually understood to be a promise.

In addition to the previously mentioned types of deterrence, it is possible to categorize the types of actors and cases in which deterrence is most likely to fail. The three categories of actors that impact the success or failure of deterrence are: 1) peer/ near-peer competitors; 2) regional powers; 3) significant non-state actors.<sup>28</sup> The first two types of actors are important for the future analysis of the Falklands case study. This conflict involved a declining global power (Britain) that was decreasing its regional presence in the South Atlantic Region and a rising regional power (Argentina). Due to the decreasing size and capabilities of Britain and the increasing size and capabilities of Argentina, the two states were approaching peer/ near peer status.

According to George and Smoke, there are three types of deterrence failure cases: 1) *fait accompli* attempt; 2) limited probe; 3) controlled pressure.<sup>29</sup> The first two types of deterrence failures will be discussed at greater length below. The *fait accompli* attempt and limited probe are very pertinent to the case study of the Falkland Islands War, because this is what Argentina attempted to accomplish by the invasion.

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<sup>26</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>29</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 536–547.

### 3. Requirements

One assumption made by George and Smoke and commonly accepted by most students of deterrence is that deterrence is not stable over time and subject to change.<sup>30</sup> This difficulty in deterrence maintenance is demonstrated through the requirements for deterrence and crisis/ war initiation. George and Smoke put forward three requirements for deterrence: “1) the full formulation of one’s intent to protect a nation [interest]; 2) the acquisition and deployment of capacities to back up the intent; and 3) the communication of the intent to the potential aggressor.”<sup>31</sup> From these assertions, a state must maintain the capability and credibility to threaten retaliation as part of deterrence by punishment.<sup>32</sup> The maintenance of these capabilities is not sufficient for deterrence success, clear communication of intent coupled with the transparency of capabilities is necessary for the opponent to believe what he is being told.

Morgan has a different twist in the fine-tuning of the above three requirements. He views the three requirements for conventional deterrence as: 1) capability to fight and escalate the conflict; 2) capability to deny; 3) capability to defeat.<sup>33</sup> If a state does not already have these capabilities, it is a distinct possibility that it will attempt to bluff and frighten an opponent as a part of strategic deterrence.<sup>34</sup> If war is going to be total, ultimate, and put the future of a state at risk, then deterrence must work all the time and military forces must be primed and ready to go in case of failure.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, the risks for a status quo power that attempts to bluff in high stakes deterrence are significantly increased.

George and Smoke claim that deterrence is theoretically more appropriate in a bipolar situation where great interests and values are at stake with the promise of

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<sup>30</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 568.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>32</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 28.

<sup>33</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 25.

<sup>34</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 9.

horrendous violence.<sup>36</sup> Deterrence is definitely easier to manage in a bipolar relationship, yet this is rarely possible. Most states have alliances or benefactors that can be used to manipulate the cost/ benefit calculus of conventional deterrence. This can be seen in the Falklands case. Upon initial inspection, this is a case of clear bipolarity between two states that had diverging interests. Yet, the United States and other regional actors played a significant role in the conflict. The United States was an ally of Britain and had signed a formal defense treaty with Britain under the NATO alliance. Hence, the choice should have been clear as to whom the United States would side with in the conflict. Nevertheless, the Argentineans believed that the United States would side with them due to the United States' Monroe Doctrine, years of rapprochement, and defense contracts and spending. Additionally, the Argentineans were attempting to acquire nuclear weapons and had a nuclear weapons program underway, which the United States was attempting to stop. Hence, the actions of the United States had an important, if indirect influence upon the success or failure of the war for either side. Their "bipolar" relationship was nevertheless qualified by other systemic connections that altered their estimates of their own chances.

The final and last requirement for deterrence involves four conditions for war initiation: 1) presence of serious conflict of interests; 2) the weaker side values higher the issue in dispute; 3) the weaker side is dissatisfied with the status quo; 4) the weaker side fears deterioration or no change in the status quo.<sup>37</sup> Any deterrence theory or strategy must successfully manage these factors. If one side is perceived to be bluffing or has a high degree of disinterest in the disputed subject area; then deterrence will fail.

## **B. THE ROLE OF POLICY, THE MILITARY, AND STATE CAPABILITIES**

Now that the definitions, types, and requirements for deterrence have been established, one can focus upon the role of politics and military strategy in deterrence. The interaction of the politics, military strategies, and state capabilities is very important to deterrence and the outbreak of war. Ramsbotham states that interests are easier to settle

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<sup>36</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 32.

<sup>37</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 16.



than positions.<sup>38</sup> This is why deterrence is so difficult to build and maintain. Most states in a conflictual relationship have positions that must be adhered to, which makes deterrence an important backstop against failure of other conflict resolution attempts.

Patrick Morgan claims that “a severe conflict presumably makes parties more willing to fight; it alters their preferences to make their level of unacceptable damage higher so it takes more to deter them. A severe conflict expands the parties’ emotional intensity, making rational calculation less likely or appealing.”<sup>39</sup> This coincides with Ramsbotham’s idea about the difficulty of positions. The more strongly a position is held, the more likely that a state will fight to maintain that position. According to T. V. Paul, states are more willing to initiate war under the following conditions: “1) politico-military strategy [ability of Blitzkrieg or *fait accompli* actions]; 2) the possession of offensive weapon systems; 3) Great Power defensive support [alliances]; 4) changing domestic power structure.”<sup>40</sup> This section of the paper will discuss how deterrence results from the successful combination of “military strategy and practical politics,”<sup>41</sup> as Freedman claims.

## **1. Policy**

Underlying a states deterrence position is concern about its security interests and the stability of the status quo relationships between states. Concern about the maintenance of stability may lead to actions that, while intended to preserve it, undermine it instead. If a state enacts measures to increase its deterrence factor, its opponent may view these preparations as a clear sign of an imminent attack.<sup>42</sup> This type of “security dilemma” has the potential to spiral out of control due to both sides increasing their relative strengths. According to Jervis, “statesman usually underestimate

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<sup>38</sup> Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts*, 18.

<sup>39</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 29.

<sup>40</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 20.

<sup>41</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 20.

rather than overestimate the impact” of the security dilemma.<sup>43</sup> Thus, statesman can approach the brink of war without realizing the gravity of the situation that they are creating.

Although deterrence is primarily a defensive security posture, it has important political dimensions and “a successful policy of deterrence must be understood in both political and military terms.”<sup>44</sup> Prior to the onset of nuclear weapons, deterrence was pursued primarily through shifting diplomatic alliances designed to affect the cost/benefit calculus of various states.<sup>45</sup> Deterrence became a policy in itself (as opposed to one of its tools) when nuclear weapons made deterrence necessary and the bipolar world of the Cold War made it possible.<sup>46</sup>

Deterrence, credibility, and political objectives are inextricably linked together.<sup>47</sup> Due to this linkage, the severity of the political conflict affected the war outcome and effectiveness of deterrence, rather than the weapon type.<sup>48</sup> One possible implication from this is that nuclear weapons were not the critical factor within deterrence during the Cold War and deterrence can still be relevant in the post-9/11 security environment. Even during the Cold War, Mearsheimer claimed that “conventional deterrence [was] ultimately based on the interaction between the broadly defined political considerations that move a nation to war and the potential costs and risks of military action.”<sup>49</sup>

Broadly speaking, there are four major policy debates within deterrence: 1) rejection of deterrence; 2) minimum deterrence; 3) massive destruction; 4) war-fighting.<sup>50</sup> The third debate does not apply to the Falkland Islands conflict because

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, Johns Hopkins Paperbacks ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 21.

<sup>44</sup> Paul K. Huth, “Deterrence and International Conflict: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Debates,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999), 27.

<sup>45</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 16.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>47</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 35.

<sup>48</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 36.

<sup>49</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 208.

<sup>50</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 22–25.

Argentina did not have nuclear weapons and (as will be demonstrated later on) Britain did not maintain the conventional capability of massive destruction. Nor did Britain maintain the ability to fight and win at any level. As Morgan succinctly stated “[Conventional deterrence] was not the threat of physical destruction so much as lowering enemy chances for military success and political survival.”<sup>51</sup> The remaining three policy debates have an impact upon an actor’s chances of success or failure. All four policy debates impact the three levels of deterrence: 1) strategic; 2) limited war; 3) sub-limited conflict.<sup>52</sup> States must have, create, and use different deterrent policies for these different levels of deterrence threats.<sup>53</sup> Deterrence below the strategic level is concerned with “influencing the opponent’s political calculus of the acceptable risks of his potential initiatives rather than simply threatening overwhelming military costs.”<sup>54</sup>

Deterrence is inevitably an element of crisis management. A state communicates its interests in a crisis by various military and political signals. After these signals have successfully deterred the opponent, the deterrer moves on, deescalates, and shifts its focus on to the next problem or crisis. The risk is that the adversary may view this action as indifference regarding the original disputed object and hence may take steps that reignite the conflict.<sup>55</sup> This appears to be the case of the Falklands Crisis, which saw British military reductions and public announcements about giving up the islands. The wrong impression was sent to the Argentineans regarding Britain’s continuing interests in the islands.

Limited wars, of which the Falklands War is an example, tend to have small, narrowly defined objectives, often accompanied by expectations of achieving a cheap victory. For deterrence to succeed in such circumstances it must address the “cheap victory strategy” of states.<sup>56</sup> Paul asserts that “the objective of a limited aims strategy is

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<sup>51</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 25.

<sup>52</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 39.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>55</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 50.

<sup>56</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 6.

to create a political or military *fait accompli*, or an irreversible condition, which may not be altered following the conclusion of the war.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, deterrence can fail if a state feels that it can quickly gain an irreversible cheap victory. Deterrence is also threatened by other political means. “War initiation by a weaker state [is] greater when the power structure changes in that state; and when an insecure, militaristic group assumes control of the decision-making process.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, if there is a political regime change and its “legitimacy and popularity are low...diversionary wars can be an effective means to attain popular support.”<sup>59</sup>

## **2. Military**

Armed forces are expected to win wars, and to deter them.<sup>60</sup> It is generally accepted that conventional deterrence will hold and be stable when parity of forces between two opponents is roughly equal in size and capabilities. Conversely, deterrence will often fail when one side gains superiority of men and equipment.<sup>61</sup> To achieve conventional deterrence, military capabilities should be such that the cost of full-scale conflict becomes profitless.<sup>62</sup> The problem with this theory is that it does not explain war initiation in an asymmetric power struggle; especially when the relative combat power of a perceived weaker state approaches the comparability of a perceived stronger state.

In addition to the balance of forces theory, three theories on military strategies of war exist to explain how the military can affect the outcome of deterrence. They are categorized as: 1) attrition; 2) Blitzkrieg; 3) limited aims (usually terrain based).<sup>63</sup> Blitzkrieg strategies allow for a quick victory at low cost.<sup>64</sup> This concept is closely linked to George and Smoke’s concept of quick victory. Blitzkrieg requires the ability to open a

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<sup>57</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 21.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>60</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 27.

<sup>62</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 29.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

hole in the front with subsequent penetration, exploitation, speed, and agility to quick and effectively route and defeat the opponent.<sup>65</sup> When this ability is attained and maintained against an inferior opponent, deterrence is most likely to fail. On the other hand, the threat of attrition warfare decreases the chances of deterrence failure. According to Paul, “deterrence or the chances of war prevention are more likely when a weaker potential initiator expects that it will have to fight a prolonged attrition war with a stronger opponent.”<sup>66</sup> A weak initiator, after a Blitzkrieg *fait accompli* attempt, will discourage the stronger power from conducting a counter-attack due to high political and military costs with a prolonged defensive war of attrition.<sup>67</sup> It must be reinforced that “a limited aims/ *fait accompli* strategy envisions neither total victory nor unconditional surrender of the opponent’s forces.”<sup>68</sup>

Huth noted that “a defending state needs the military capacity to respond quickly and in strength to a range of military contingencies, and thus be able to deny the attacker its military objectives at the outset or very early strategies of an armed offensive.”<sup>69</sup> This is an essential component of deterrence if it is going to prevent a state from gaining a cheap victory. Paul explains that “if a weaker state can expect successful employment of a Blitzkrieg strategy, it may also provide incentive to the state to initiate an asymmetric war.”<sup>70</sup> In *fait accompli* strategies, this quick thrust will be followed by a defensive strategy to maintain the limited gains “until political settlements can be achieved mostly through third party intervention.”<sup>71</sup>

### 3. State Capabilities

The political and military components of deterrence can be very nebulous and difficult to foresee and understand. Conversely, assessing the capabilities of states are

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<sup>65</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 36.

<sup>66</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 25.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>69</sup> Huth, *Deterrence and International Conflict: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Debates*, 30.

<sup>70</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 26.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 26.

one of the easiest elements to determine. A lot of information regarding the relative strength of states can be acquired through open source intelligence (OSINT) assets. For example, Jane's puts out on a regular basis information about the current force structure and weaponry of most states around the world. Additionally, it is fairly easy to find a state's military doctrine regarding its training methods and capabilities through the Internet and various other sources. With the improved capabilities of commercial satellite imagery, it is now possible to develop a low-tech geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) assessment of closed societies (to include North Korea) military capabilities and disposition of forces.

This easily acquired information is important because states assess other states as threats based upon their capabilities.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, military power is estimated and valued when it is compared to another state, alliance or opponent. This is done through the process of a Net Assessment that estimates the credibility of capability of the party's ability to follow through on a declared threat.<sup>73</sup> T. V. Paul noted that "preponderance deters war."<sup>74</sup> Peace and deterrence are maintained when great powers have the preponderance of power; yet, the chance of war increases as the gap between capabilities of the status quo power and challenger states decreases.<sup>75</sup>

### **C. PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN DETERRENCE**

Any strategy of deterrence must take account of psychological factors such as risk, signals, perception, cognitive dissonance, rationality, and fear. All these factors are best summed the following quotation from Lebovic: "The existential deterrent acquires its power from the nonrational world of fear, psychological bias, and uncertainty and not

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<sup>72</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 13.

<sup>73</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 12.

<sup>74</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 6; Paul appears to contradict Mearsheimer's balance of forces theory previously discussed and the existing literature supports both claims. Further exploration is warranted, but it will not occur in this forum.

from the rational world of deduction and mathematical precision.”<sup>76</sup> This section of the chapter will cover rationality, perception, signals, fear, and risk.

## **1. Rationality**

Conventional deterrence theory relies upon decision theory, both of which embrace the notion of the rational actor. Rationality can be best understood as “a mode of decision-making that logically links desired goals with decisions about how to realize those goals.”<sup>77</sup> Yet, there exists a vast body of literature that disputes the existence of complete actor rationality. This section will discuss the various limits on actor rationality.

Decision theory claims that actors base their choice of options upon a set of goals and the cost/ benefit calculation of attaining those goals. Yet, many students of international relations believe that the decision-makers choice of payoffs is focused upon “final subjective estimates.”<sup>78</sup> These “subjective estimates” in the decision-making process are heavily influenced by the following four factors: 1) values; 2) outcomes; 3) courses of action; 4) information.<sup>79</sup> These four factors are important because they encompass decision makers’ beliefs and thought filters; and if they are not taken into consideration, then deterrence can fail when it is solely based upon the rational actor model.<sup>80</sup> Rational decision-making prioritizes goals in accordance with values; but, it does not necessarily relate to the “reasonableness” of an outside observer.<sup>81</sup>

One modification or alternative to the rational actor model is that rationality should be changed to reasonableness. Payne explains that “reasonable typically implies much more than ‘rationality’... [it] suggests that that observer understands that decision-making and judges it to be sensible based on some shared or understood set of values and

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<sup>76</sup> Lebovic as cited in: Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 54.

<sup>77</sup> Keith B. Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 7.

<sup>78</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 73.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 74-75.

<sup>80</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction*, xi.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 8.

standards.”<sup>82</sup> He further explains that “rationality does not imply that the decision-makers’ prioritization of goals and values will be shared or considered “sensible” to any outside observer.”<sup>83</sup> For deterrence to work, one must drop the idea of rationality and settle for the concept of reasonableness on the part of decision makers.<sup>84</sup>

Since the concept of rationality is in dispute, one must also consider the effects of “irrationality” and even “unreasonableness upon conventional deterrence. Payne states that “irrational” and “unreasonable” behaviors are considered behavior far outside the shared norms and standards of international life.<sup>85</sup> This has important ramifications for conventional deterrence theory. One reason for this is that some theorists claim that successful deterrence actually depends upon the “irrationality” or “unreasonableness” of actors.

Morgan claims that “our entire notion of deterrence must rest on the existence of great uncertainty in the world and considerable imperfection in its decision makers.”<sup>86</sup> One source of this uncertainty is the irrationality of actors. Although some might claim that irrational actors cannot be deterred, irrationality can result from relatively rational benign thoughts and events. Long claims that “while it might be irrational... for one to *intentionally* use a deterrent threat knowing that it would invite one’s own destruction, it is arguable more credible for one to argue that the deterrent threat might be used *unintentionally* as a result of escalation.”<sup>87</sup> Thus escalation, which may be a rational act, may nevertheless result in apparent irrational consequences.

Another argument against rationality is given by Long when he claims that “making the threat response automatic and hence disconnected from the cost/benefit calculation” makes deterrence more credible.<sup>88</sup> This is because, no matter what the cause

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<sup>82</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction*, 8.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>84</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 55.

<sup>85</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction*, 10.

<sup>86</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 46.

<sup>87</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 9.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 15.



or justification from the opponent is, the threatened action will occur. Unconditional commitments tend to turn threats of action into promises of action if the behavior to be deterred occurs. Yet, most would agree that “decisions stemming from unconditional commitments are not rational.”<sup>89</sup> Therefore, irrationality can actually improve the credibility of commitments issues, especially when reactions to threats are made automatic.<sup>90</sup>

Morgan furthers the claim that rational actor theory is not necessary for successful deterrence. He states that “it is not necessary to assume rationality to model deterrence for description, explanation, and prescription.”<sup>91</sup> Morgan further claims that one must start with the assumption that actors “are somewhat irrational, not capable of being wholly rational, or lacking sufficient time or information to be rational.”<sup>92</sup> When some or all of these factors are taken into account, it is easier to persuade irrational actors with the appropriate threats to make deterrence very effective.<sup>93</sup>

The rational actor model is further complicated by the fact that a decision maker’s rationality is based upon his preferences.<sup>94</sup> According to Ellery Eels, “a course of action is rational only relative to a possessed body of information (beliefs and desires) in terms of which the merits of the available courses of action can be rationally evaluated.”<sup>95</sup> Jervis points out that statesman need to understand the opponents “framework of beliefs”<sup>96</sup> and determine “what the [opponent’s] intentions are.”<sup>97</sup> Determining an opponent’s intentions is important because the thought process and behavior behind those

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<sup>89</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 13.

<sup>90</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 61.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>95</sup> As cited in: Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 16.

<sup>96</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 8.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 9.

intentions are an important part of conventional deterrence.<sup>98</sup> The psychological goal of deterrence is to “anticipate how [the opponent] will behave in response to... deterrence policies.”<sup>99</sup>

It is important to discuss how an actor interprets information to determine unreasonableness or irrationality. “Thought filters” have an important impact upon how actors perceive and react upon information.<sup>100</sup> They are linked to the discussion on biases (in the following section) and how information is taken in, analyzed, and interpreted. In a crisis situation, a decision maker’s natural assumption is that the opponent is irrational.<sup>101</sup> Thus, this thought filter is automatically going to bias how the information is analyzed and will portray the opponent as an irrational or unreasonable actor. The higher the level of hostility, the higher the level of perceived irrationality or unreasonableness is likely to be.<sup>102</sup>

In the final analysis, rationality in decision making “under severe cognitive constraints,” needs to be a goal rather than a premise of both deterrence theory and deterrence as a policy.<sup>103</sup> Freedman states that an actor can have rational thinking even if it is different from our own,<sup>104</sup> in which case it is more appropriate to think in terms of reasonableness versus rationality. Jervis claims that generalizations based upon motivated and un-motivated biases can replace the rational actor model in deterrence theory.<sup>105</sup> It is more appropriate to think of biases as supplements to rationality and reasonableness rather than as replacements for them.

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<sup>98</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction*, vii.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>101</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 59.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>103</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 76.

<sup>104</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 49.

<sup>105</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 270.

## 2. Perception, Misperception, and Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance in the form of perception and misperception is very important to effective conventional deterrence. If deterrence is going to be successful against an opponent, one must understand the thought processes behind their behavior.<sup>106</sup> The psychological goal is to “anticipate how [the opponent] will behave in response to... deterrence policies.”<sup>107</sup> According to Jervis, “judging others’ intentions is notoriously difficult.”<sup>108</sup> This has a direct impact upon assessing the role of influence within deterrence. As a result of this confusion, “who is attempting to influence whom, and for what purpose, is rarely straightforward.”<sup>109</sup>

As mentioned above, signals are an attempt to clarify this uncertainty. Actors can attempt to accomplish this by producing a “clear declaratory policy that makes clear what is to be deterred.”<sup>110</sup> Yet, “clear signals” given by the sender are often received and interpreted in different ways by the opponent.(Jervis, Lebow, and Stein 1989) A state will be perceived as a threat if it “displays a willingness to ignore accepted procedure, a disregard of what are usually considered the legitimate rights of others, and an exceptionally high propensity to accept risks in order to improve its position.”<sup>111</sup> The perception of a state’s hostile behavior will be amplified if “the intent to harm will be attributed to an actor when observers believe that he could have reached his ostensible goal without hindering someone else.”<sup>112</sup> One possible result of a state being perceived as a threat is that deterrence becomes irrelevant, because potential adversaries believe that war is inevitable.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction*, viii.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>108</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 14.

<sup>109</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 48.

<sup>110</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 8.

<sup>111</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 1.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 17.

Identifying biases in perception, in oneself and others, is at least as difficult as divining an opponent's intentions. According to Robert Jervis, the brain uses biases to process and categorize information.<sup>114</sup> He explains that "biases are ways of treating information that diverge from the standard definitions of rationality."<sup>115</sup> There are two types of biases, motivated and unmotivated. "[M]otivated biases arise from the emotions generated by conflicts that personal needs and severe situational dilemmas pose"<sup>116</sup> that are not easily resolved. They "serve important psychological functions, primarily minimizing the discomfort that would be created by a full appreciation of the negative attributes of objects the person values..."<sup>117</sup> Motivated and unmotivated biases are an important foundation in actor's perceptions. Perceptions are heavily influenced by an actor's convictions about "how the world works."<sup>118</sup>

One type of motivated bias is that the "needs of decision makers and their states can strongly influence whether others are seen as threats, the kind of threats they are seen as presenting, and the best way of dealing with the threats."<sup>119</sup> If motivated biases dominate, then reasons for policy choices are actually rationalizations (policy first, justification follows.)<sup>120</sup> Motivated biases create errors that "lead decision makers to underestimate or overestimate threats."<sup>121</sup> "When motivated biases are at work, it is particularly hard for others to predict the state's behavior."<sup>122</sup>

On the other hand, "unmotivated biases are the products of the complexity of the environment and the inherent limitations of our cognitive capabilities."<sup>123</sup> An actor's "predispositions constitute the most important unmotivated influence on perceptions, but

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<sup>114</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 3.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

two other unmotivated biases affect both predispositions and perceptions.”<sup>124</sup> They are availability and representativeness. Availability is when “a person’s inferences are influenced by the ease with which various patterns come to mind.”<sup>125</sup> Representativeness differentiates what categories objects belong to based upon descriptions without taking into account statistical facts behind the information.<sup>126</sup> For example, when asked what is more dangerous, shark attacks or driving an automobile; most people will instinctively answer that shark attacks are more dangerous, despite the statistics that show more people die from automobile accidents than shark attacks. A dangerous result of biases is that during conditions of poor transparency, actors can be led to believe that their opponent is acting irrationally because of unseen internal biases.<sup>127</sup> These concepts lead directly into the following discussion of conventional deterrence signals.

### **3. Signals**

Signals are also very important to conventional deterrence because they indicate the general intentions of a state. Given, the importance of signals; it is surprising that they are often times ambiguous, not clear, or misread. The goal of a state in signaling is to send a “clear declaratory policy that makes clear what is to be deterred.”<sup>128</sup> A challenge for signals is how to determine when a signal is being rejected versus when it is not being received by the opponent.<sup>129</sup>

Signals are important because they are an indicator of a state’s behavior, which is used as a window to view the value that it places on objects or interests.<sup>130</sup> Signals are sent by the policy decision makers and the military in terms of intentions regarding issues of interest and value. Freedman claims that “military signals in particular are often

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<sup>124</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 4.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 23–24.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>129</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 8.

<sup>130</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 30.

notoriously ambiguous, and the problems of interpretation grow in the psychological intensity of the crisis.”<sup>131</sup> This point will be amply demonstrated in Chapter V.

Some claim that “democratic states are more capable of communicating credible threats in a crisis because democratic leaders face higher domestic political costs for backing down in a crisis.”<sup>132</sup> This is not always the case. During events leading up to the Falklands conflict, Britain sent a horde of mixed signals to Argentina regarding its permanent interests on the Falkland Islands. Additionally, the domestic environment of both Britain and Argentina further complicated the situation and made it worse. The interaction of signals and the Falkland Islands War will be discussed in later chapters.

Huth elaborates on the difficulties of democracies in sending unambiguous signals to their opponents. Clear signals to opponents are more difficult to produce due to domestic concerns, including uncertainty as to the degree of domestic support behind a given policy. This is further complicated by the fact that governments use war and crisis to rally support, or to unite a divided populace. Conversely, a government might mobilize its public and hype a conflict to signal the gravity of the situation.<sup>133</sup> At a minimum, these considerations suggest that democratic states are no more likely to appear rational, or even reasonable, to outsiders, than any other kind.

#### **4. Risk**

Risk is central to any political actor’s cost/ benefit analysis. Failures to assess risk accurately often play a significant role in the unintended consequences of states actions that give rise to war. It is important, in this connection, to note the distinction between warnings and threats. Long puts forward the following idea: “A warning sought to convey the deterrer’s true and inherent interest. A threat, in contrast, conveyed the deterrer’s commitment to a position that was not clearly in its true and inherent interest.”<sup>134</sup> This distinction has serious implications because if a threat is a commitment

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<sup>131</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 15.

<sup>132</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 28.

<sup>133</sup> Huth, *Deterrence and International Conflict: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Debates*, 31.

<sup>134</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 47–48.

to a position that is not in a states interest, then the state's credibility is questionable and the opponent's risk calculations will be affected as well.

Long also points out that "humans as a rule tend to be risk acceptant when facing loss and risk averse toward gain."<sup>135</sup> As a result of this idea, it is important to bring up two important points about risk. First, it is a function of the capabilities of the attacker and defender. Second, risk is also a function of the relationship between military and political implications of going to war.<sup>136</sup> Deterrence can fail because of a "complete incomprehension of the risks." For example: "A tourist in a foreign country comes upon a policeman who is trying to tell him not to enter a restricted area. The tourist walks on and is arrested."<sup>137</sup> Deterrence failed because the tourist did not understand the situation and the language of the signals being given to him.<sup>138</sup> Jervis points out that "deterrence theory requires statesman to balance the risks of confrontation with the costs and risks of concessions."<sup>139</sup>

## **5. Fear**

Thucydides once wrote: "Nobody is driven into war by ignorance, and no one who thinks that he will gain anything from it is deterred by fear...[W]hen there is mutual fear, men think twice before they make aggressions upon one another."<sup>140</sup> Fear is a major component of deterrence. Yet it often requires imperfect rationality, or even irrationality, to be effective. Morgan wrote that "deterrence is used not because the opponent is rational but in hopes of shocking or scaring him into doing the right thing."<sup>141</sup> Irrational fears can also result in deterrence if the decision maker's fears go beyond the evidence of

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<sup>135</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 13.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>137</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 64–65.

<sup>138</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 28.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>140</sup> As cited in: Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 31.

<sup>141</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 5.

significant destruction.<sup>142</sup> The emotional element of fear and anxiety is beneficial to deterrence in another fashion. If an opponent is fearful, credible reassurance “that the threatened harm will not be implemented” if the opponent maintains the status quo can strengthen the deterrent relationship.<sup>143</sup>

#### **D. CREDIBILITY AND REPUTATION WITHIN DETERRENCE**

Credibility and stability are important concerns for the success deterrence.<sup>144</sup> Morgan claims that “credibility is the quality of being believed.”<sup>145</sup> It is not sufficient for a state to have the capability to destroy, it is equally important that the opponent believe in this ability.<sup>146</sup> Occasional wars could reinforce reputations and credibility, further enhancing general deterrence.<sup>147</sup> Press indicated that three important points about credibility exist: “1) it is a perception; 2) it is not tangible; 3) credibility of a threat is not synonymous with seriousness of a threat. The seriousness surrounding a threat is directly related to the cost of the threat.”<sup>148</sup> Credibility is linked to whether or not the opponent believes in both the threat and the capability to enforce the threats. It is also partly based upon past commitments upheld.<sup>149</sup> Credibility may be demonstrated through clear communications of intent, the will to follow through on a threat, and military maneuvers.<sup>150</sup>

There are four types of conditional threats that roughly correspond to the various types of deterrence strategies: narrow/ broad; extended/ central; denial/ punishment,

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<sup>142</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 59.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>144</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 107.

<sup>145</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 15.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>148</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 38.

<sup>149</sup> Daryl Grayson Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2005), 10–11.

<sup>150</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 37.



immediate/ general.<sup>151</sup> Central threats have a higher credibility because they impact sovereign territory versus a third party.<sup>152</sup> Threats based upon denial and punishment is also very important to the credibility of deterrence. Threats based upon denial promised the opponent that they will not accomplish their objectives, period. Punishment based threats promised that if an opponent attempted to get its objective, coercive force would be used to prevent them from maintaining it and the costs of the operation would far outweigh the benefits.<sup>153</sup>

Mearsheimer claims that there are two types of credibility at stake in conventional deterrence: credibility of response to whatever behavior is to be deterred, and credibility of commitments to sovereign territories or to third parties who may be operating under expectations of extended deterrence.<sup>154</sup> Yet, the credibility of response and commitment are contingent upon the above-described nature of threats.

One method of increasing credibility is to make the threatened response automatic, regardless of the cost/ benefit calculus.<sup>155</sup> Deterrence and credibility of commitment are based upon the nature and value of interests in dispute.<sup>156</sup> Effective commitments and signaling are in turn the result of the strength of interest in the disputed problem.<sup>157</sup> Commitments have an important role in creating a credible capability. The aggregate forces of a state, their proximity to the theater of operations, and the state's ability to project power all have an impact upon the credibility of commitment.<sup>158</sup> A challenge to deterrence is how to maintain a credible threat while seeking détente and

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<sup>151</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 17.

<sup>152</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, 32.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 36–37.

<sup>155</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 18.

<sup>156</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 15.

<sup>157</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 559

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 560.

cooperation.<sup>159</sup> As parity among actors increases, the chances of war between the actors increase as well.<sup>160</sup> As George points out, commitment falls on the defenders of the status quo.<sup>161</sup>

Reputation is one of the most controversial subjects in deterrence theory. Some claim that “face is one of the few things worth fighting over.”<sup>162</sup> Others assert that there is no direct linkage between behavior and reputation. “Fighting to create a reputation for resolution with adversaries is unnecessary, and fighting to create a reputation for resolution with allies is unwise.”<sup>163</sup> These discrepancies of opinion are magnified by the fact that “reputation is intangible and difficult to measure and identify. It provides an intuitive test of the quality of a policy rather than a specific goal in itself.”<sup>164</sup> Yet if reputation is negligible, hard to judge and calculate, how does one account for actors still believing in it and using it in their assessments and judgments?<sup>165</sup>

These contradictions were best recapped by Huth in the following three theories about the role of reputation in deterrence: “1) strong interdependence of commitments; 2) case specific credibility position; 3) qualified interdependence of commitments.”<sup>166</sup> The role of reputation in credibility is strongest in the first theory; and it is one of many factors in determining credibility within the third theory. The second theory maintains that the role of reputation is negligible in a state’s assessment of an opponent’s credibility.

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<sup>159</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 11.

<sup>160</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 11.

<sup>161</sup> Crocker, Hampson and Aall, *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World*, 26.

<sup>162</sup> As cited in: George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 550.

<sup>163</sup> As cited in Freedman, *Deterrence*, 145.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

The controversy over reputation is further amplified due to its dependence upon the perception of the opponent and the perception of allies.<sup>167</sup> Some state actors view recent behavior and actions by their opponents to be symbolic of their future actions.<sup>168</sup> T. V. Paul argues that the reputation and past actions of the stronger power can affect the credibility of deterrence, particularly in the context of limited war initiated by the weaker side—very much the case in the Falklands conflict.<sup>169</sup> In such circumstances, at least, it seems clear that reputation does play a role in the overall success or failure of deterrence.

## **E. COST/BENEFIT CALCULATIONS**

The success or failure of deterrence as both a strategy and theory is heavily dependent upon the cost/benefit calculus of states. This is where the difference between nuclear and conventional deterrence is most significant and most obvious. Nuclear deterrence is takes for granted that excessive damage can be rapidly inflicted. Hence, the short-term costs are readily appreciated, and the difference between the long-term and short-term costs becomes unimportant, because the latter are so overwhelming. On the other hand, the difference between the short-term and long terms costs are not readily apparent in conditions of conventional deterrence. Short-term costs may appear low, but as losses are inflicted slowly over time, the long-term costs increase. Had these long-term costs been known at the outset, a state may not have initiated the action in the first place.<sup>170</sup> This is one of the reasons why the threat of attrition warfare adds to the stability of deterrence.

Deterrence depends on “the manipulation of cost/ benefit calculation and the generation of fear.”<sup>171</sup> Cost/benefit analysis in turn relies on the assumption that states are rational actors and “power maximizers.”<sup>172</sup> Yet it is apparent in practice that states

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<sup>167</sup> Huth, *Deterrence and International Conflict: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Debates*, 32–33.

<sup>168</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 14.

<sup>169</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 14.

<sup>170</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 28.

<sup>171</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 23–24.

<sup>172</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 8.

often do not fully understand or anticipate the true cost of their actions. The cost/benefit calculation often determines whether deterrence will succeed or fail. Cost is directly associated with the speed and success of military action; if the action is successful and fast, the costs of the operation will be expected to remain low.<sup>173</sup> If an attacker envisions a quick victory, then war can ensue and deterrence has failed.<sup>174</sup> This has major implications for the success of conventional deterrence. If a state maintains a blitzkrieg type of warfare capability or the state believes that it can successfully accomplish a rapid *fait accompli* mission, then the chances of deterrence failure are high. Deterrence works if total costs outweigh the total benefits AND an alternative solution to war exists with a better payoff.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, conventional deterrence is most likely to succeed when the likelihood of success is low and the associated costs are high.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 8.

<sup>174</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 24.

<sup>175</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 15.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

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### III. HISTORY OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS/ ISLAS MALVINAS

*Nothing is easier than self-deceit because what each man wishes, he also believes to be true.*

Demosthenes, Third Olynthiac<sup>177</sup>

The Falkland Islands War (1982) is an example of regional deterrence failure during the Cold War. It involved a former Great Power that still played a central role in the Western alliance against the Soviet Union, and an emerging regional power generally aligned with the West. This chapter, within the larger study of conventional deterrence, will describe the historical context behind deterrence failure that led to the Falkland Islands War<sup>178</sup> between Britain and Argentina. It will be subdivided into three sections. The first section encompasses the time period (1771 to 1965) from the origins of the islands sovereignty claims to the involvement of the international community and the United Nations in resolving this conflict. The second time period (1965 to 1982) will comprise the precursors to the war that started in 1982. The third section will briefly detail the events leading to war and the war itself.

#### A. ORIGINS OF THE DISPUTE (1771–1965)

The ownership of the Islands has been in dispute since the early 1500s.<sup>179</sup> The more relevant claims originate between 1763 and 1765 with the French, their settlement at Port Louis (Port Stanley,) and subsequently designating the islands *Les Malouines*. However, the French sold their claims to the Spanish in 1765 to avoid going to war. Upon

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<sup>177</sup> As cited in: Steven Stavropoulos, *The Wisdom of the Ancient Greeks: Timeless Advice on the Senses, Society, and the Soul* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003), 116.

<sup>178</sup> This thesis will henceforth refer to the Falkland Islands/ Islas Malvinas as the Falkland Islands for two important reasons. First, the general public and current literature on the subject refer to the set of islands as the Falkland Islands. Additionally, most maps and charts to refer the group of islands as the Falkland Islands, with the occasional reference to them as Islas Malvinas. So as to maintain continuity with most of the literature and not create confusion, this thesis keeps the Falkland Islands name. Secondly, this thesis is studying conventional deterrence in regards to the maintenance of the status quo relationship between the deterrer and deterree. Given that Britain was the state attempting to maintain the status quo and Argentina was the state attempting to change it, I refer to the islands as the Falkland Islands. This is the name the British gave the islands and using this name more closely aligns with the underpinnings and concepts behind deterrence.

<sup>179</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 3.

the sale, Port Louis was renamed Port Soledad and the islands renamed *Islas Malvinas*.<sup>180</sup> In 1766, the British settled West Falkland with over 100 settlers without any knowledge of the other settlements on East Falkland. Upon each settlement discovering the other, Spain and Britain each demanded that the other leave.<sup>181</sup> In 1770, Spain ousted British colonists on the islands, which almost resulted in war. As a result, Spain apologized and Britain re-colonized the islands (1771). The new British colony remained only a couple years before it was abandoned. Nonetheless, Britain never relinquished its claim to the islands and left a placard affirming its sovereignty over them.<sup>182</sup> Yet, the Spanish fully maintained that the islands and their territorial integrity belonged to them and no one else. After Argentinean independence in 1820, Argentina assumed the claim on the Falkland Islands from Spain.<sup>183</sup> Subsequently, in November 1820, Argentina populated the islands, raised their flag, and proclaimed the islands for Argentina.<sup>184</sup>

Then in 1831, the Argentinean governor of the islands attempted to assert his governments fishing rights in the area and confiscated three American ships. As a result, the *USS Lexington* sailed to the Falkland Islands, destroyed everything, forcibly removed the inhabitants, and declared the islands a government-free zone.<sup>185</sup> This action not only resulted in serious damage to U.S. and Argentinean relations,<sup>186</sup> but it added further complications to the territorial claims over the islands.

Following the American actions and the islands being declared a government free zone, Argentina attempted to reestablish its colony (September 1832) on the islands; but, the new inhabitants mutinied and killed the new governor.<sup>187</sup> Amongst this turmoil on the islands, the British returned to reclaim their territory and reestablish its colony. In

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<sup>180</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 4–5.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>182</sup> Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), xxxii.

<sup>183</sup> Duncan Anderson, *The Falklands War, 1982* (England: Osprey, 2002), 11.

<sup>184</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, xxxi.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., xxxi, Anderson, *The Falklands War, 1982*, 11.

<sup>186</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, xxxii.

<sup>187</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, xxxii.

January 1833, the British re-colonized the islands with the assistance of the *HMS Clio*. The *ARA Sarandi* attempted to protest the British reoccupation, yet it was outgunned and was forced to leave taking most of the Argentine settlers with it.<sup>188</sup> In 1840, the Falkland Islands officially became a crown colony of Great Britain;<sup>189</sup> the Falkland Islands Company was created (1851) to handle the economic well being of the colony.<sup>190</sup>

Argentina revived its claims upon the islands in 1910 and again in 1927 when the colony was extended to include the South Georgia Islands and the South Sandwich Islands.<sup>191</sup> After World War II and the creation of the United Nations, Argentina has consistently argued that the Falkland Islands fell under the category as a decolonization issue.<sup>192</sup> This stalemate between Argentina and Britain existed until 1965 when Argentina began to gain the support of the UN General Assembly.

## **B. PRECURSORS TO WAR (1965–1982)**

The precursors to the armed conflict in the Falkland Islands are numerous, yet they fall into three main categories. These three categories are negotiations, conflictual incidents, and the politico-military situation between the two states.

### **1. Negotiations**

Britain was in a quandary. The Falkland Islands were very far away from Britain and the logistics of maintaining the islands for a small population were becoming insurmountable. Britain wanted to maintain minimum deterrence with Argentina while it attempted to get the islanders to consider the transfer of the islands back to Argentina. Britain never believed that the Argentineans had a rightful claim to the islands, but they wanted to focus their efforts upon their NATO commitments and not have to dedicate an expensive military force to what was seen as an insignificant set of islands in the South

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<sup>188</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, xxxii.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxii.

<sup>190</sup> Anderson, *The Falklands War, 1982*, 12.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>192</sup> Rubén O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict: The War for the Malvinas* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 3.



Atlantic. This is the background in which the UN General Assembly involved itself and forced negotiations upon Britain.

In 1960, the General Assembly passed Resolution 1514 (XV) calling on the international community to bring “a speedy and unconditional end [to] colonialism.”<sup>193</sup> In paragraph two of the declaration, it states that all “peoples have the right to self-determination,”<sup>194</sup> and “[i]mmediate steps shall be taken, in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories or all other territories which have not yet attained independence, to transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories.”<sup>195</sup> And finally, it stated that “[a]ny attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.”<sup>196</sup>

In 1965, the General Assembly passed Resolution 2065 (XX) specifically referring to the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas). It specifically referred back to UNGAR 1514 (XV) of 1960 by reinforcing the verbiage “of bringing to an end to everywhere colonialism in all its forms, one of which covers the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).”<sup>197</sup> It “[i]nvite[d] the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom... to proceed without delay with the negotiations... with a view of finding a peaceful solution to the problem, bearing in mind the provisions and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the *interests* of the population of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).”<sup>198</sup> Britain abstained from voting on this resolution when this resolution had a potential impact not only upon the Falkland Islands, but on other crown colony holdings, including Belize and Gibraltar.

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<sup>193</sup> "UN General Assembly Resolutions 15d Session," <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/15/ares15.htm> (accessed 10/25/2009).

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> "UN General Assembly Resolutions 20th Session," <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/20/ares20.htm> (accessed 10/25/2009).

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. Italics added on the word interests as this is a key word between the two belligerents. The Argentine's insist upon interests, whereas the British reinforce the will of the islanders.

In 1973, the General Assembly passed resolution 3160 (XXVIII) in direct reference to Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas). The Argentineans were gaining support for their cause from the non-aligned states in which Argentina was directly praised in the resolution verbiage. "Expressing its gratitude for the continuous efforts made by the government of Argentina...to facilitate the process of decolonization and to promote the well-being of the population of the islands."<sup>199</sup> The UN General Assembly began treading a fine line between interceding on the part of the Argentineans in blatant disregard of the wishes and interests of the islanders who desired to remain British.

In 1976, Argentina was formally backed by the non-aligned states as personified by the document "Political Declaration adopted by the Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Non-Aligned Countries."<sup>200</sup> General Assembly resolution 31/49 "Approves the chapter of the report of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples relating to the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)."<sup>201</sup> All these resolutions ignored the ground truth on the Falkland Islands, which was that the islanders were in fact British citizens and adamantly wished to remain so. Their vehemence on the subject strengthened after the Junta took over in Argentina (1976). From all appearances, the UN was ignoring its own mandate on self-determination.

A solution based on the concept of 'lease back' first entered into the negotiations in 1975. The idea was that Britain would cede sovereignty of the islands over to the Argentineans with the islands being leased back to Britain for a certain period of time.<sup>202</sup> However, this idea was scrapped due to the potential of oil exploitation within the disputed region of the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, and Sandwich Islands.<sup>203</sup> This

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<sup>199</sup> "UN General Assembly Resolutions 30th Session," <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/28/ares28.htm> (accessed 10/25/2009).

<sup>200</sup> "UN General Assembly Resolutions 32nd Session," <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/31/ares31.htm> (accessed 10/25/2009).

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 38–41.

<sup>203</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 39–40.

idea kept reappearing in 1976, 1979, and 1980.<sup>204</sup> The idea of leasing the islands back from Argentina for a period of ninety-nine years finally ended in 1980 when a fierce debate occurred in the House of Commons and the Falkland Islands lobby ensured that the political turmoil would be too much to broach the subject again.<sup>205</sup> After the defeat in the House of Commons of the Lease Back Agreement, the Falkland Islanders participated in all the negotiations between Britain and Argentina which effectively made negotiations more difficult and Argentine success less likely.

## **2. Rising Indicators of Conflict**

During the late 1970s, there were many indicators of Britain's ambivalence to the South Atlantic region and Argentina's aggressive intentions towards regaining their "lost" territory. These indicators demonstrated Argentine anxiety and impatience over the status of the Falkland Islands and its subsidiary islands, which included South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. These indicators or incidences were intended to assert Argentine sovereignty within the region and gauge British responses to their activities. Argentina's firing upon the *RSS Shackleton*, its occupation of South Thule Island, and chasing Russian and Bulgarian fishing boats out of South Atlantic Waters<sup>206</sup> (disputed waters of the Falkland Islands area) were some of the incidents that exemplify Argentine aggressiveness.

There were signs, beginning in 1975, that Argentina was becoming restless over the Falkland Islands situation. In 1975, the Argentine Foreign Minister told the British Ambassador to Argentina (David Ashe) that as a pre-condition for continued talks between the two states, Britain should turn a "blind eye" towards the dependencies and any potential occupation of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Ashe warned that if Argentina aggravated the situation, Britain would be forced to respond militarily to any attack on the island groups.<sup>207</sup> This dialogue occurred prior to the *RSS Shackleton*

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, 9.

<sup>206</sup> T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 151.

<sup>207</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 55.

incident, the occupation of South Thule Island in 1976, and under a different British government. This warning was not followed up by the British.

Following this dialogue, Argentina aggravated the situation when it attacked the *RSS Shackleton*. In February 1976, the *RSS Shackleton* went to South Atlantic to explore the economic potential of the area and surrounding waters of the Falkland Islands. As, these waters were in dispute between Britain and Argentina, Argentina took it upon itself to fire upon the ship, claiming violation of Argentinean territorial waters.<sup>208</sup> The Argentine military wanted to escalate the incident, but Isabella Peron did not take their advice. Further Argentine military action was not taken, and Britain returned to the negotiating table to include discussions on the issue over sovereignty of the islands.<sup>209</sup>

In late 1976, the military Junta under General Videla took over in Argentina; their purpose was to restore order, reestablish economic and political systems, and end the insurrection.<sup>210</sup> As part of the Junta's program of correcting national problems, it took a more forceful policy towards regaining the Falkland Islands. The Junta sent an armed "scientific" party to South Thule Island under the guise of research projects. The British discovered the Argentinean presence on South Thule Island in December 1976 when it was retrieving a magnetometer placed on the island as part of a research project. The landing party from the *HMS Endurance* found nearly twenty Argentine military personnel led by a major.<sup>211</sup> The British party from *HMS Endurance* reported the incident to London on January 4, 1977. The FCO attempted to deal with the situation in a quiet unpublicized manner as they feared the public knowledge and criticism of their inability to react to this Argentinean aggression. It also wanted the South Thule Island occupation to be kept quiet as the FCO wanted to proceed with negotiations over the sovereignty issue of the Falkland Islands. Although the FCO wanted to downplay the South Thule Island incident, the Prime Minister was not willing to let this pass without

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<sup>208</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, 9.

<sup>209</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 163.

<sup>210</sup> Richard C. Thornton, *The Falklands Sting: Reagan, Thatcher, and Argentina's Bomb*, 1st ed. (Washington: Brassey's, 1998), 4.

<sup>211</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 77.

some form of action taken. On January 19, 1977, Britain formally protested the Argentinean presence on South Thule as a violation of British Sovereignty.<sup>212</sup> The crisis over South Thule Island in 1976 and subsequent British lack of military action suggested to the Argentines that Britain did not want a war in the South Atlantic.<sup>213</sup>

These incidents represented three periods when Argentina considered going to war with Britain and decided against it. The first period revolved around the *RSS Shackleton* (February 5, 1976) incident in which Argentine naval warships fired across the bows of the *RSS Shackleton*. Lord Shackleton was in the area conducting an analysis economic potential and viability within the South Atlantic. The Second period concerned the Argentine occupation of South Thule Island in 1976. If Britain had reacted against South Thule, the Junta was prepared to capture the British Antarctic Survey Station on South Georgia with follow up plans for invading the Falkland Islands. This did not occur because of British diplomatic and non-military protests, and Argentina did not have international nor regional support for its actions.<sup>214</sup> The third event (that never came to pass) occurred in 1977 when Argentina was beginning to plan another island occupation in the South Sandwich Islands; however, Argentina tabled these plans. This was the incident in which Britain secretly sent several frigates and a nuclear submarine to the South Atlantic as a deterrence measure. It is doubtful that the Argentine's knew about the secret task force<sup>215</sup> and thus this action is difficult to assess as a valid conventional deterrence measure since signals must be clear, demonstrated, and transparent. Britain's actions cannot be said with certainty to have met any of these necessary deterrent criteria.

### **3. Politico-Military Situation**

A politically momentous year for Argentina occurred in 1976. As previously mentioned, the *RSS Shackleton* and South Thule Island incidences demonstrated Argentine growing aggressiveness, and Britain's reluctance to counter this aggression.

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<sup>212</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 77.

<sup>213</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 151.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 163–164.

Additionally, there were changes within the Argentine government that led it on the path to war. These changes started under the Peron regime and were accelerated under the military Junta.

After the Junta, under General Videla, took over (1976); Argentina began a program of increased military spending, resulting in a severe strain on the Argentinean economy. Some reasons behind the military spending and buildup were the Beagle Channel dispute with Chile and the Falklands dispute with Britain.<sup>216</sup> Initially after the Junta's assumption of control, it planned more belligerent actions to assert its sovereignty over the disputed regions in the South Atlantic. However, this aggressiveness subsided after 1977 due to Britain moving back to the negotiating table and its ensuing willingness to discuss the transfer of the Falkland Islands sovereignty back to Argentina.<sup>217</sup>

1981 was also a turning point in the conflict because it marked a return of Argentinean aggressiveness following the failure of Falkland Islands sovereignty negotiations. The Junta's growing pessimism about the effectiveness of negotiations was reinforced by Ridley's removal from the FCO (the chief negotiator of the Lease Back option), the defeat of the lease-back option in the British Parliament, and Prime Minister Thatcher giving the Falkland Islanders veto power within the Falkland Islands negotiations.<sup>218</sup> This alone was not sufficient for the Junta to take actions. Argentine domestic politics also impacted how the Junta responded to the Falkland Islands issue. By 1982, the Argentinean people had grown weary of the Junta and its reign of terror.<sup>219</sup> Thirty years of economic and political instability crippled Argentina, a country that once had the highest standard of living in Latin America.<sup>220</sup> By 1981, Argentinean newspapers began to call for the end of military rule.<sup>221</sup> Thus, the Junta attempted to use an external conflict to bolster its domestic support and offset any criticisms.

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<sup>216</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 156.

<sup>217</sup> Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, Johns Hopkins Paperbacks ed. (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 96.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 97–98.

<sup>221</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 98.

For Britain, 1981 was also a very important year. Britain and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) were in the midst of an economic crunch. During 1979-81, the MoD overspent its budget<sup>222</sup>, the conservative party enacted a deflationary policy that negatively affected the whole British economy, and the world was in a global recession.<sup>223</sup> It is against this backdrop that the Nott Defence Review, the revocation of automatic citizenship to the Falkland Islanders, and the withdrawal of the lone symbol of British commitment to the region (the *HMS Endurance*) occurred.

Under these economic conditions, the Nott Defence Review (1981) attempted to realistically match ends and means in British defense commitments and spending. Yet it had catastrophic affects upon Britain's conventional deterrence against Argentina. Nott's defense review outlined four main roles for the British armed forces. They included: 1) provide an independent strategic and theater nuclear force for the NATO alliance; 2) defend the United Kingdom; 3) provide a major land and air contribution to the defense of mainland Europe; 4) deploy a major maritime capability in the western Atlantic.<sup>224</sup> As a result of this defense review, the size and capabilities of the British Royal Navy were to be severely restricted in favor of submarine warfare and land-based maritime aircraft. In an attempt to save surface ships, the Royal Navy recommended scrapping the *HMS Endurance*, *HMS Britannia*, LPDs (amphibious assault ships), and disbanding the Royal Marines. Nott decided to scrap the *HMS Endurance* (over the objections of the FCO), but he kept the Royal Marines and the royal yacht *HMS Britannia*.<sup>225</sup> The Royal Navy was going to lose two aircraft carriers as well. In addition to scrapping the *HMS Hermes*, Nott and the MoD signed an agreement with Australia to sell the *HMS Invincible* in February 1982.<sup>226</sup> Both of these aircraft carriers were to play important roles in the Falkland Islands War.

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<sup>222</sup> Andrew Dorman, "John Nott and the Royal Navy: The 1981 Defence Review Revisited," *Contemporary British History* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2001), 98–99.

<sup>223</sup> Eric Grove, "The Falklands War and British Defense Policy," *Defense & Security Analysis* 18, no. 4 (December, 2002), 310.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 308; White Report, *The United Kingdom Defence Programme: The Way Forward* (London, UK: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, [June 1981]).

<sup>225</sup> Dorman, *John Nott and the Royal Navy: The 1981 Defence Review Revisited*, 108.

<sup>226</sup> Dorman, *John Nott and the Royal Navy: The 1981 Defence Review Revisited*, 112.

There were other signals (besides the Nott Defence Review) that demonstrated Britain's reduced interest in the South Atlantic Region. These other indicators were the revocation of automatic British citizenship to the Falkland Islanders and the proposal to close the British Antarctic Survey Base on South Georgia Island.<sup>227</sup> The Falkland Islands situation was summed up by Freedman, "Britain was holding doggedly on to the islands about which very few [British] people cared, but those few who did, cared strongly. In Argentina, everybody cared."<sup>228</sup>

### **C. THE WAR (SPRING 1982)**

The attack by Argentina should not have come as a shock or surprise to Britain since it had cracked the Argentinean diplomatic code in 1979.<sup>229</sup> The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) should have been able to ascertain credible and updated threat assessments in regards to Argentina's intentions. Yet, as will be demonstrated in Chapter IV, this was not done effectively.

Once the Galtieri Junta took over in late 1981, they set an invasion timeline for the Falkland Islands to occur between June and October of 1982; however due to the Davidoff expedition on South Georgia Island, the timetable had to be sped up.<sup>230</sup> The reason for setting the invasion between June and October was the onset of winter in the South Atlantic. This would make any British reaction to the use of force against the Falkland Islands more difficult, if not impossible. Also, Argentinean weapons procurement and refit would have been complete in October 1982. Argentina had not received all of its planned orders for French Exocet missiles, the installation of the missile systems on the French-built Super Etendard aircraft was incomplete, and not all the naval ships had been retrofitted to accept new weapon systems.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 150.

<sup>228</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, xxxiii.

<sup>229</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 91.

<sup>230</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 154.

<sup>231</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 156.



The Junta's invasion plan hit its first obstacle when the Argentine Foreign Minister Costa Mendez gave a speech on 2 March 1982 in which he implied that Argentina would settle the dispute to its own satisfaction. The Argentine Naval Attaché reported that Mendez' speech had alerted the British to Argentine military plans when it had not.<sup>232</sup> The net result was that Argentina moved up its invasion plans several months earlier than when it expected to be fully prepared.

Then on March 19, 1982, the Davidoff incident occurred. A group of Argentinean commercial salvagers, led by Davidoff, landed on South Georgia to scrap an old whaling station. When they landed, they planted the Argentinean Flag and sang their national anthem. Although this group had permission to scrap the whaling station, they were told by the British embassy that they had to check in with the base commander at Grytviken, South Georgia Island. When Davidoff refused to follow the proper port of call procedures, the *HMS Endurance* with twenty-one Royal Marines onboard was sent to remove the salvagers from the island. The Argentinean government told the British embassy that an Argentine ship was on the way to remove Davidoff and his crew. The *HMS Endurance* held off from removing the salvagers and it was met by three Argentine warships, forcing it to leave without removing the Argentineans.<sup>233</sup>

By March 28, 1982, it was clear to Britain that Argentina meant to resolve the Falkland Islands issue by force. Britain saw increasing proof of intent through Argentine naval preparations that consisted of more than a series of training exercises. Additionally, the presence of three naval ships to prevent the Davidoff expedition from being ejected off of South Georgia Island was proof that the Falkland Islands situation could no longer be ignored. It was during this time, just before the actual invasion, that the First Sea Lord, Sir Henry Leach, pushed the Prime Minister to respond militarily to Argentine aggression. He was one of the few people who believed that a naval operation would be successful against Argentina.<sup>234</sup> His actions had the added benefit of giving

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<sup>232</sup> Alistair Finlan, "War Culture: The Royal Navy and the Falklands Conflict," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 214.

<sup>233</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 99.

<sup>234</sup> Finlan, *War Culture: The Royal Navy and the Falklands Conflict*, 193.

options to the Prime Minister on how to deal with this worsening situation. After the Argentine invasion on April 2, 1982, the British claims for legitimization in the Falkland Islands War revolved around three issues: 1) the self-determination of the Falkland Islanders; 2) the illegitimacy of using force to resolve a dispute; 3) the right of self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.<sup>235</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

As a result of their choice in going to war, Argentina lost for the foreseeable future any chance of regaining sovereignty over the islands. British defense spending remained relatively unchanged; yet three aircraft carriers were kept instead of the planned two. It was determined to keep a British surface expeditionary naval capability and the airfield on the Falkland Islands was improved to allow for military operations. The Falkland Islands became an independent protectorate for which Britain negotiated international agreements and provided defense; however, the Falkland Islands ruled and administered its territorial waters and those of the subsidiary islands.

The Thatcher government successfully overcame opposition and remained in power until 1990. She was to become one of the longest serving Prime Ministers in Britain. The Argentine Junta fell in 1983, initiating a liberalization period in Argentina in which it returned to a democratic form of government. All three Junta leaders were prosecuted for actions during their reign. Despite all of these changes, the Falkland Islands remain a point of contention in British/ Argentine relations.

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<sup>235</sup> Lawrence Freedman, "The Impact of the Falkland Islands Conflict on International Affairs," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 9.

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#### IV. POLICY, THE MILITARY, AND STATE CAPABILITIES IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS CONFLICT

*War is the last of all things to go according to schedule.*

Thucydides<sup>236</sup>

Conventional deterrence failed to prevent the Falkland Islands War (1982) between Britain and Argentina. This chapter argues that the reason for the failure lay in Britain's inability to maintain a firm position towards the South Atlantic Region; thus it could not create, plan, or leverage threats in the form of flexible deterrent options, both politically and militarily, in order to deter Argentine aggressiveness. Britain frequently gave the impression and appearance that it did not want nor would it fight to maintain British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands.<sup>237</sup> In fact, through disjointed governmental policies and military defense decisions, Britain negated any potential conventional flexible deterrence options and pinned itself into a corner. By 1982, Britain had to either accept either going to war or accept Argentinean sovereignty over the islands. Argentina, by the same token, had also pinned itself into a corner that prevented it from backing away in the face of British military reaction and global backlash against their use of force option. Once their planning assumptions were proven false, the Junta could not back down without their government falling.

The Falkland Islands conflict was an intense dispute for both the British and Argentineans with severe geopolitical consequences on both sides. Three elements are important to the geopolitical structure of a conflict. They are: 1) the objective of a state's particular policy; 2) the natural and historical context of the conflictual environment; 3) the theater of military action.<sup>238</sup> Geopolitics attempts to understand the relationship

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<sup>236</sup> As cited in: Steven Stavropoulos, *The Wisdom of the Ancient Greeks: Timeless Advice on the Senses, Society, and the Soul* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003), 127.

<sup>237</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 17.

<sup>238</sup> Jeffrey Sloan, "The Geopolitics of the Falklands Conflict," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 23–24.

between geographical patterns and political history. It is also “a theory about spatial relationships and historical causation.”<sup>239</sup>

There were numerous geopolitical implications for the region involving the sovereign control of the Falkland Islands. In 1959, the Antarctic Treaty demilitarized Antarctica so that military competition in the area moved to who controlled the seas surrounding it. Additionally, there was economic competition between Chile, Argentina, and Britain over who controlled the South Atlantic Ocean’s natural resources. Finally, the Falkland Islands and their position had a significant geographical influence on the power and influence within the region.<sup>240</sup>

The geopolitical dynamics of the region were also precarious because of Chile’s dispute with Argentina over the Beagle Islands and the control of the Beagle Channel. If Chile’s claim to control the Beagle Islands was vindicated then Argentinean access to and control over the South Atlantic Ocean would be severely hindered. With Chilean control over the Beagle Islands, Argentina feared that Chile might aid the British in providing logistical support to the Falkland Islands, which had the effect of decreasing Argentina’s influence within the region and made reacquiring the islands more difficult.

The above geopolitical implications of the region culminated in late March and early April 1982. It became apparent that war was approaching and Britain had two choices: 1) it could resolve this conflict by negotiations and concessions; or 2) it could use force and prevent the Argentineans from having any face saving options.<sup>241</sup> As will be demonstrated in this chapter this was not an easy decision. The political and military stage had not been set to assure a British victory. On the international scene, Britain had a nominal advantage in the UN as a permanent member of the Security Council; yet in the UN overall, it was at a disadvantage because the third world viewed the conflict as a

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<sup>239</sup> Sloan, *The Geopolitics of the Falklands Conflict*, 25.

<sup>240</sup> Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 5.

<sup>241</sup> Lawrence Freedman, “The Impact of the Falkland Islands Conflict on International Affairs,” in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 10.

decolonization issue.<sup>242</sup> Britain's support in the UN was further put in question by three factors: 1) two of the non-permanent Security Council members were Spain and Ireland (both also had contested land disputes with Britain); 2) Jeanne Kirkpatrick, U.S. Ambassador to the UN, supported the Argentine cause; 3) Argentina could expect support from the Latin American community as a whole.<sup>243</sup>

Britain's failure to plan and reassess its position in the South Atlantic Region prevented it from maintaining an effective conventional deterrence stance. The absence of British threats guided Argentine politico-military decisions towards a path of war from which it could not turn back. Argentina's policies and military activities forced it to fight even when conditions proved that it was not to their advantage.

#### **A. POLICY**

Britain neither formulated, nor planned, nor enacted a consistent policy in regards to the South Atlantic between 1965 and 1982. Argentina on the other hand, had a consistent policy in regards to the Falkland Islands. They had successfully lobbied the UN General Assembly to get the Falklands recognized as a decolonization issue despite the Falkland Islanders being British citizens. In 1976, after the Junta took over, there was a definite policy and planning shift in priorities within the Argentine government.

Jervis wrote that "statesman usually underestimate rather than overestimate the impact" of the security dilemma.<sup>244</sup> Thus, statesman can approach the brink of war without realizing the gravity of the situation that they are creating. This dynamic existed between Britain and Argentina; neither state expected to go to war, but they both did. This section argues that inattention to goals, policy requirements, planning assumptions, and ignorance of strategic indicators prevented the British from leveraging effective threats against Argentina.

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<sup>242</sup> Freedman, *The Impact of the Falkland Islands Conflict on International Affairs*, 11.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>244</sup> Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, Johns Hopkins Paperbacks ed. (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 21.

## 1. Goals

In order to understand how two states went to war, one must examine the goals of each state. British governments had little interest in the Falklands. Their focus was upon the Cold War and NATO commitments. As a result of this limited interest, the British never sent clear signals or threats about its intentions to maintain the islands. Further complicating the matter, the British government (after 1971) was too willing to discuss and negotiate the island sovereignty issue; until 1975, when the prospect of economic resource exploitation appeared. In 1980, when Britain had decided to no longer negotiate the issue of the islands' sovereignty, it did not detail nor plan for credible threats to protect the Islands against future Argentine acts of aggression.<sup>245</sup>

British hesitance in its South Atlantic foreign policy was due to unclear internal policy and conflict. The unclear internal policy resulted from British fears about Argentina breaking life support agreements to the Falkland Islands and Britain having to resume those duties. In the early 1970s, Britain had successfully shifted some of the logistical burden of supporting the islands onto the Argentineans and it was unwilling to resume those burdens. Throughout the late 1970s, Britain suffered from budgetary constraints that prevented them from investing heavily in a far off remote region of little practical significance.<sup>246</sup> Thus, British goals concerning the Falkland Islands were never clear cut to other ministries within the government as well as to foreign governments, especially Argentina.

Argentina on the other hand had very clear goals in regards to the Falkland Islands: they wanted them back. In the 1950s and early 1960s, decolonization was on the global agenda. Argentina successfully lobbied the UN General Assembly (mostly third world states) to list the Falkland Islands as a decolonization issue and several non-binding resolutions were passed to support this issue.<sup>247</sup> Throughout the 1960s up to the

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<sup>245</sup> T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 148.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>247</sup> See UNGA Resolutions 1514 (1960), 2605 (1965), 3160 (1973), and 31-49 (1976). They all called upon Britain to negotiate with the Argentineans with the implication of ceding sovereignty of the islands to Argentina regardless of the will and needs of the islands population and citizenship.

mid 1970s, Argentina kept up international diplomatic pressure on the British. In 1976, there was a change in Argentine tactics. They pursued diplomatic negotiations, but they also began to assert their sovereignty claims over the South Atlantic by more forceful means. This included the occupation of South Thule Island, firing upon the *RSS Shackleton*, and chasing off Russian and Bulgarian fishing trawlers within the disputed territorial waters.<sup>248</sup>

With the collapse of the final attempt at the lease-back agreement between the two states and the subsequent failure of negotiations in 1981, Argentina examined options for forcing Britain back to the negotiating table. One option was to break diplomatic relations with Britain and end logistical support to the Falkland Islands. This would force Britain to resume the expensive burden of the islands. The downside to this approach was that it could lead Britain to develop closer ties to Chile, which is exactly what Argentina did not want to happen.<sup>249</sup> Or, the alternative was to invade the islands, take them over, leave a small contingent of Argentine forces on the islands, and then approach Britain on the resumption of negotiations. These two divergent goals (of Britain and Argentina) had very significant effects upon the overall planning process, conventional deterrence, and leveraging of threats.

## **2. Requirements**

The previous section discussed the various goals or lack thereof within the Falkland Islands conflict. These goals had a tremendous impact on the planning and use of conventional deterrence within the region between the two states. George and Smoke state that “deterrence is... a necessary or useful instrument of foreign policy, but the correct and prudent use of deterrence strategy is by no means self-evident or easily determined in all circumstances.”<sup>250</sup> In the case of Britain, since it did not have clearly delineated policy goals or objectives, planning for deterrence was highly unlikely. In fact, deterrence had worked in reverse. The Argentineans had successfully deterred Britain

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<sup>248</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 151.

<sup>249</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, 11.

<sup>250</sup> Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 3.



from acting within the disputed region until Britain could no longer ignore the problem. The firing upon the *RSS Shackleton* (February 1976), for instance, deterred Britain from exploring the economic potential of the region in dispute. This deterrence included deliberate and credible threats against Britain's base on South Georgia Island if Britain attempted to remove the Argentines from South Thule in January 1977.<sup>251</sup> Britain's central strategic commitment to NATO caused it to almost completely ignore its war-fighting capability outside of the NATO theater of operations. Britain professed to follow a policy of minimal deterrence prior to the Falkland Islands War. Yet, when it was repeatedly provoked, it did nothing. Some claim that Britain actually attempted minimal deterrence when it sent a submarine and several frigates to the South Atlantic in 1977. There is, however, no proof that the Argentines knew of this force's existence, and the British went out of their way to keep knowledge of this task force a secret; which suggests, at a minimum, that the operation was misconceived if its aim was deterrence.<sup>252</sup> Thus, Britain's minimum deterrence is probably best understood as a reflection of its indifference to the whole issue outside the NATO framework.

On the other hand, Argentina actively pursued minimum deterrence to prevent and counter Britain's claim to sovereignty in the South Atlantic. Throughout the 1970s, the Junta actively pursued a "security first" policy in which it had steadily built up its war-fighting capability<sup>253</sup> to counter and threaten Chile and Britain's influence within the region.

In 1982, the Junta believed that they could attain a cheap easy victory following the failure of negotiations with Britain. Thus, British deterrence failed and a war started as a result. Britain did not demonstrate a coherent policy that would have convinced the Argentinean leadership that war did not offer any prospect of easy victory in Argentina's favor, but might well end in disaster for the government. The decision for war was also a profound miscalculation on the part of Argentina, of course, for which its regime paid a heavy price. But British conduct made it an easier mistake to make.

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<sup>251</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 163.

<sup>252</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 84–86.

<sup>253</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 159.

### 3. Assumptions

As part of the planning process, one makes assumptions based upon friendly/enemy capabilities and actions. One major British assumption was that it expected to use British forces allocated for NATO roles in out-of-area operations and contingencies. No special out-of-area capabilities existed within the British Royal Navy.<sup>254</sup> They were prepared to conduct anti-submarine warfare in northern waters, and had given little thought to expeditionary warfare. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) considered the main mission of the Royal Navy to be fighting the third Battle of the Atlantic, not protecting British interests around the world.<sup>255</sup>

In 1981, the British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) assessed that Argentina wanted sovereignty over the islands. Yet, the JIC assumed that the Argentineans would prefer a peaceful settlement to war. The key variable in this assumption was Britain's continued willingness to negotiate the sovereignty issue over the islands, which by then was no longer valid.<sup>256</sup> The 1981 JIC assessment also stated that Argentinean aggression would be preceded by diplomatic and economic pressures ranging from interruption of the islands' air and sea services to an occupation of one of the unoccupied dependency islands.<sup>257</sup> This process had already started with the occupation of South Thule Island in 1976. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) believed that if the Falkland Islands developed into a crisis, there would be a discernable Argentinean military buildup prior to the onset of hostilities.<sup>258</sup> This was subsequently proven false. Additionally, the British reaction to the Argentine invasion was by no means a certainty. The House of Commons and Conservative Party were split on the issue of British reaction and Pym (FCO) was for letting the U.S. work negotiations prior to military activity.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Ian Speller, "Delayed Reaction: UK Maritime Expeditionary Capabilities and the Lessons of the Falklands Conflict," *Defense & Security Analysis* 18, no. 4 (December 2002), 363.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>256</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, 18.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>258</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 149.

<sup>259</sup> John Nott, "A View from the Centre," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 59–61.

The Argentinean's also made some strategic assumptions that were ultimately to lead to their defeat. They assumed that they could create a political and military *fait accompli* action without a British military reaction or a global backlash. This assumption was based upon prior successes—the occupation of South Thule Island, Argentina's navy chasing Bulgarian and Russian fishing trawlers out of the disputed waters, and the reduction of the British Atlantic fleet.<sup>260</sup> As late as April 1, 1982, Argentina did not believe that Britain would fight a war in the South Atlantic, although the British task force had already put to sea and was re-organizing at Ascension Island. Due to this incorrect set of assumptions, the Argentineans did not extend the runway at Port Stanley which would have allowed them to fly A-4 Skyhawks and French built Etendards aircraft from the islands and increase their aircrafts effectiveness, as opposed to flying long range from the mainland to attack British forces.<sup>261</sup>

Another Argentinean assumption going into the conflict was that American interests would favor concessions by Britain. It expected the United States to convince the British not to divert forces away from the NATO Cold War effort. Argentina also thought the U.S. would act as a neutral go-between to peacefully resolve the conflict. It was also hoped that U.S. neutrality would deny Britain the “use of strategic [and] intelligence facilities in the Atlantic.”<sup>262</sup> These expectations about American neutrality were reinforced by the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Jeanne Kirkpatrick. She had continually fought for U.S. neutrality in the conflict in order to maintain good relations with Central and South America.<sup>263</sup> Argentina also expected American support, or at a minimum neutrality, in light of its commitments to the Monroe Doctrine and the Rio Pact.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 151.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

#### 4. Strategic Indicators

Thus far, this section discussed goals/ objectives, requirements, and assumptions necessary for planning and policy implementation; especially when deterrence and the use of credible threats are either a stated or implied goal to ward off conflict. But, these are not enough; one must have indicators for when policy or plans need to be reevaluated to verify the azimuth of the state and to make necessary course corrections to prevent being forced into decisions due to a lack of viable alternatives. Both Argentina and Britain did not have strategic indicators for policy review and corrections. This segment will use three indicators (of many) that would have been useful in requiring a reexamination of the situation, plan, and state of deterrence within the South Atlantic. These indicators are changes in internal/ domestic leadership and politics, changes in the geopolitical structure, and aggressive activities of any kind. All three of these indicators were present in connection with the Falkland Islands from 1970–1982.

One major indicator for a reexamination of policy and plans is the change in domestic political sentiment or leadership. One reason for this is that if there is a political regime change and its “legitimacy and popularity are low...diversionary wars can be an effective means to attain popular support.”<sup>265</sup> Paul states that “war initiation by a weaker state [is] greater when the power structure changes in that state; and when an insecure, militaristic group assumes control of the decision-making process.”<sup>266</sup> Britain should have reexamined its South Atlantic policy (or lack of policy) when the Junta took over in December 1976. Argentine aggressiveness was evident prior to the Junta, yet it was made worse after the Junta took over. During the Junta’s tenure, South Thule Island had been occupied with the threat of naval reinforcement and attack upon South Georgia Island if Britain attempted to remove the Argentine personnel.

The fact that, from 1976 on, Argentina was ruled by military governments was in itself a major reason for its going to war. The Juntas were more authoritarian than any of their predecessors, and supported a “security first” policy in which they increased

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<sup>265</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 33.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

spending on the Argentinean armed forces. When General Galtieri took over (1981), the Argentine economy was in shambles and under his regime, it worsened.<sup>267</sup> By the same token, at the commencement of the Falkland Islands War (1982), the political situation in Britain was somber. Britain suffered from a poor economy, declining perceptions of national self worth, unpopular political leadership, and numerous industrial disputes.<sup>268</sup> These conditions should have prompted Argentina to reassess its assumptions as well.

When the Junta lost the dispute over the Beagle Islands and Channel to Chile, it worried about the effectiveness of its naval power in the South Atlantic. Having control of the Falkland Islands would have decreased Argentina's tensions for two reasons. First, Argentinean control of the Falkland Islands would have given Argentina unrestricted and control of the South Atlantic. Second, control over the Falkland Islands would have destroyed the threat posed by a potential British-Chilean anti-Argentina relationship.<sup>269</sup>

In 1975, the Argentine Foreign Minister told the British Ambassador to Argentina, David Ashe, that as a pre-condition for continued talks between the two states, Britain should turn a "blind eye" towards the dependencies and any potential occupation of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Ashe warned that if Argentina aggravated the situation, Britain would be forced to respond militarily to any attack on the island groups.<sup>270</sup> It is important to note that this dialogue occurred prior to the occupation of South Thule Island in 1976 and under a different government with Britain. This conversation should have had a more permanent effect upon British assumptions and policy.

The crisis over South Thule Island in 1976 and subsequent British lack of military action demonstrated to the Argentineans that Britain did not want a war in the South Atlantic.<sup>271</sup> The British discovered an Argentine scientific military presence on South

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<sup>267</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 159.

<sup>268</sup> Alistair Finlan, "War Culture: The Royal Navy and the Falklands Conflict," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 193.

<sup>269</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 162

<sup>270</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 55.

<sup>271</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 151.

Thule Island in December 1976 while retrieving survey equipment on the island. The British party from *HMS Endurance* reported the incident to London on January 4, 1977. The FCO attempted to deal with the situation in a quiet unpublicized manner as they feared a backlash from the public knowledge of their inability to react to this Argentinean aggression. It also wanted the South Thule occupation to be kept quiet as they wanted to proceed with negotiations over the sovereignty issue of the Falkland Islands. On January 19, 1977, Britain formally protested the Argentinean presence on South Thule as a violation of British Sovereignty.<sup>272</sup> But, no further action was taken.

Other signals of Britain's decreased interest in the region resulted from the decision to remove the *HMS Endurance* in 1982, the revocation of automatic British citizenship to the Falkland Islanders, and the proposal to close the British Antarctic Survey Base on South Georgia Island.<sup>273</sup> These activities definitely made Argentina reassess its assumptions, which resulted in the decision to use force in reacquiring the islands.

Argentine Foreign Minister Costa Mendez gave a speech on 2 March 1982 in which he said that Argentina would settle the dispute to its own satisfaction because the negotiations had failed. The Argentine Naval Attaché reported that Mendez' speech had alerted the British to Argentine military plans, when in fact it had not.<sup>274</sup> The net result was that Argentina moved up its invasion plans by several months, while the British did nothing.

After the *RSS Shackleton* incident, in February 1976, the Defence Operational Planning Staff released a report on military options to counter Argentine aggression. It stated that Argentina held the initiative in the region and could choose to escalate an incident anytime that it wanted. Due to several research vessels operating in the area and the necessary logistical life-support ships required to support the islands; Argentina could easily disrupt activities. Given that sea resupply was the most efficient and capable

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<sup>272</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 77.

<sup>273</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 150.

<sup>274</sup> Finlan, *War Culture: The Royal Navy and the Falklands Conflict*, 214.

means of resupply, if Argentina laid siege to the islands, it would take a naval task force deployment of six weeks to deliver the necessary supplies to the islands.<sup>275</sup> It is interesting to note that the British did not examine or attempt to increase the capabilities of the airfield on the Falkland Islands to support military aircraft, especially military aircraft capable of delivering logistical materials. Also, Britain did not take any measures to expand its options towards threatening Argentinean capabilities and interests within the region. In general, its outlook suggests a mixture of complacency towards Argentina, mingled with a desire to avoid any provocative action that might startle the Junta into taking some dramatic action that would force the issue.

## **B. THE MILITARY**

Military planning needs to take into account threats posed by a potential opponent's forces and weapons capabilities, as well as an opponent's ability to conduct blitzkrieg, attrition, and/or limited warfare. These plans need to address both the primary and secondary theaters of governmental interest as well as potential military contingency options in unanticipated conflicts. This section of the chapter will demonstrate how the British MoD and military failed to plan and maintain credible military options to include viable threats against an increasingly aggressive Argentina. The first part will discuss the status of Britain's flexible deterrent options prior to 1976. The second part will examine the status of Britain's flexible deterrent options after 1976 and how it impacted the evolving conflict over the Falkland Islands.

### **1. British Conventional Deterrence Options: Part I (1956–1976)**

The Suez Crisis of 1956 was a major turning point in British politics. To briefly recap, the Suez Crisis occurred when Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal. In response to this action, Britain, France, and Israel attacked Egypt (without consulting the United States) with the intent of reversing Egypt's actions. Since the United States had not been consulted in their plans, the United States refused to support them and all three states were forced to withdraw.

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<sup>275</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 62.

As a result of the Suez Crisis (1956), Britain began to build up its naval expeditionary capability in order to maintain the capability to conduct unilateral operations and protect British interests throughout the world. These capabilities included a large fleet of aircraft carriers capable of conducting airborne early warning, strike, fighter, and anti-submarine missions. However, in 1966, British policy reviews were conducted and it was decided that British conventional forces needed to be focused upon Western Europe. As a result of these reviews and decreased capabilities, the British overall military capabilities of force projection were focused upon the nuclear threat and anti-submarine warfare.<sup>276</sup> As a result of these decisions, in the late 1960s, Britain began dissociating itself from global commitments by ridding itself of bases, air, and naval capabilities necessary for power projection outside of Europe.<sup>277</sup>

Prior to 1974, Britain had a tiered system of conventional deterrence for the South Atlantic and Antarctica. This system comprised of naval bases in Simonstown, South Africa (4,000 miles from the Falkland Islands), Bermuda (6,000 miles from the Falkland Islands), and the *HMS Endurance*, the permanent British presence in the South Atlantic.<sup>278</sup> As a result of governmental policies enacted in the late 1960s, these deterrence features were allowed to atrophy; beginning with the closure of Simonstown in 1974, the closure of Bermuda in 1976, and the final attempt to scrap the *HMS Endurance* in 1981.<sup>279</sup> The *HMS Endurance* had almost been sold or scrapped twice in its lifetime. The first time came in 1975 defence review, when it was saved due to the *RSS Shackleton* incident and the work of the FCO to keep it as the lone symbol of British presence in the region. The second time came in the 1981 defence review, but Lord Carrington (FCO) was unable to convince the MoD of the ship's deterrent value in the region. Because the *HMS Endurance* did not have nor fit a NATO role, and was due for an expensive overhaul in 1982, it was decided to scrap the ship instead.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Speller, *Delayed Reaction: UK Maritime Expeditionary Capabilities and the Lessons of the Falklands Conflict*, 364–365.

<sup>277</sup> Finlan, *War Culture: The Royal Navy and the Falklands Conflict*, 229.

<sup>278</sup> Sloan, *The Geopolitics of the Falklands Conflict*, 25.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>280</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, 19–20.



In the face of blatant Argentinean antagonism, vehemence, and threats about recovering the Falkland Islands<sup>281</sup>; the military and Ministry of Defence might well have played a pivotal role in creating options and viable counter threats for the British government. Yet this did not occur. As will be demonstrated in the next part, the military's lack of planning and foresight did not give options to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) or the British government to counter increasingly Argentine aggressive moves.

## **2. Britain's Conventional Deterrent Options: Part II (1976–1982)**

By 1976, Britain's flexible deterrent options were non-existent in the South Atlantic. The only symbol of British commitment to the region was the *HMS Endurance*, and this ship was constantly threatened with being withdrawn and scrapped. This segment will demonstrate how the lack of British military options and requisite planning outside of the European Theater directly contributed to Argentina's perception that Britain would not respond militarily if Argentina used force to reacquire the islands.

### ***a. Balance of Forces/Parity***

As mentioned in chapter II, there are two contending theories of deterrence in regards to military balance of forces. One theory states that conventional deterrence will be maintained when opponents have the same capabilities resulting in the equal threat of destruction. This portion of the chapter argues that the parity of forces between Britain and Argentina caused the breakdown of deterrence within the South Atlantic Region. The balance of forces narrowed between the two antagonists not only in the size of the British Navy and its decreased capability, but also in the weapon systems accrued by Argentina. This closeness in parity of forces decreased Britain's credible threat of making Argentina's costs for aggressive action higher than the benefits it would receive.

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<sup>281</sup> See Chapter III in reference to the UN General Assembly Resolutions and international support for the Argentine cause of recovering the Islands. Also, remember the Argentine Foreign Minister's conversation to the British Ambassador to Argentina in 1975 regarding the South Sandwich Islands.

The British Chiefs of Staff determined that the type of military presence needed to deter aggression vis-à-vis the Falkland Islands would be “very expensive and would engage a significant portion of the country’s naval resources... [and] its dispatch could precipitate the very action it was intended to deter.”<sup>282</sup> Thus, fear and risk entered into the military calculation of a political decision. The Chiefs of Staff also determined that “to get such a force to the South Atlantic in response to a military threat to the Islands would take at least twenty days and probably longer, given the need to assemble and prepare. If it arrived after the Islands had been occupied there could be no certainty that they could be retaken.”<sup>283</sup>

The MoD determined that the defense of the Islands was not economically viable or practical; although, some consideration was given to how to recapture the islands if they were attacked. They had determined that it would take a brigade-sized task force to recapture the islands; however, Britain at the time was reducing its sealift capability as well. In 1975, the Chief of Naval Staff proposed moving and storing sea mines on the Falkland Islands in case of Argentinean aggression. The FCO vetoed this option as it was viewed as too provocative a move.<sup>284</sup>

The 1981 Nott Defence Review in the British MoD made a big impression on the Argentines. In 1981, Britain and the MoD were in the midst of an economic crunch. During 1979-81, the MoD had overspent its budget<sup>285</sup>, the conservative party had a deflationary policy that negatively affected the whole British economy, and the world was in a global recession. It is against this backdrop that the Nott Defence Review occurred.<sup>286</sup> The Nott Defence Review attempted to realistically match ends and means, yet it had catastrophic effects upon Britain’s interests in the South Atlantic vis-à-vis Argentina.

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<sup>282</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, 19.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>284</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 62–63.

<sup>285</sup> Andrew Dorman, "John Nott and the Royal Navy: The 1981 Defence Review Revisited," *Contemporary British History* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2001), 98–99.

<sup>286</sup> Eric Grove, "The Falklands War and British Defense Policy," *Defense & Security Analysis* 18, no. 4 (December 2002), 310.

Nott's defense review outlined four main roles for the British armed forces. They included: 1) provide an independent strategic and theater nuclear force for the NATO alliance; 2) defend the United Kingdom; 3) provide a major land and air contribution to the defense of mainland Europe; 4) deploy a major maritime capability in the western Atlantic.<sup>287</sup> This review focused on Britain's military commitment to NATO, and only lip service to other regional commitments. It did plan on increasing the number of out-of-area cruises and exercises to the South Atlantic, Caribbean, Indian Ocean, and points further east.<sup>288</sup> Yet, it did not address the requirements to fill "out-of-area" requirements affecting British interests.

As a result of this review, the focus for the Royal Navy became solidified as anti-submarine warfare and keeping the lines of communication open in the Northern Atlantic. The Nott Defence Review planned on keeping two of four aircraft carriers. The *HMS Hermes* would be sold as soon as the *HMS Ark Royal* (the fourth carrier) came on line and became operational.<sup>289</sup> In an attempt to save surface ships, the Royal Navy recommended scrapping the *HMS Endurance*, *HMS Britannia*, LPDs (amphibious assault ships), and disbanding the Royal Marines. Nott decided to scrap the *HMS Endurance* (over the objections of the FCO), but he kept the Royal Marines and the royal yacht *HMS Britannia*.<sup>290</sup> Although the Royal Marines were kept, the amphibious assault ships (*HMS Intrepid* and *HMS Fearless*) were not going to be replaced or maintained. Along with the decision to sell the *HMS Hermes*, Nott and the MoD signed an agreement with Australia to sell the *HMS Invincible* in February 1982.<sup>291</sup> Both of these aircraft carriers were to partake in the Falkland Islands War. The net result of the Nott Defence Review was that the size and capabilities of the Royal Navy surface fleet were significantly reduced, with the carrier fleet reduced to one active and one in refit by the end of 1982.

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<sup>287</sup> Grove, "The Falklands War and British Defense Policy," 308; White Report, *The United Kingdom Defence Programme: The Way Forward* (London, UK: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, [June 1981]).

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Dorman, *John Nott and the Royal Navy: The 1981 Defence Review Revisited*, 108.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 112.

The Junta had been actively building up the military since 1976. By 1982, the Argentine military consisted of numerous advanced aircraft capable of air-to-air refueling, air combat, and anti-ship operations. The Argentine Navy also had one aircraft carrier capable of land-based aircraft strike capability, an old pre-World War II heavy cruiser, several diesel submarine and numerous frigates.<sup>292</sup> These capabilities were impressive but not enough to threaten a British attempt to reverse the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands. One must also take into consideration the weapons systems held by each opponent to better understand how close in parity of capabilities of the two states were.

Paul claims that superior capabilities rested with the British; they had an all-volunteer force versus a conscription force, the British military expenses were six times higher than Argentina, Argentina's military was heavily involved in internal security, and Britain had technical weapon superiority over Argentina. This was offset by Argentina's tactical advantage of being closer to the theater of operations.<sup>293</sup> The point about technical superiority is debatable, as Argentina did have numerous anti-ship missiles, numerous aircraft with refueling capabilities, the British lacked an airborne early warning system in theater, and it did not have carrier-based strike aircraft with capabilities equivalent to those of Argentina's land-based fighters. The most obvious difference between the two sides was probably in the training and general professional level of the personnel involved, particularly among the ground forces. Once British forces were ashore on the Falklands, there was little chance that the Argentine garrison there would be able to expel them.

Another Argentine weakness lay in its ASW capabilities. It did not have an effective anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capability, which resulted in the Argentine Navy staying in home waters during the war. Following the sinking of the *ARA General Belgrano*, the Argentine Navy withdrew its only credible ASW platform, the aircraft carrier *Veinticinco de Mayo*, which was rendered irrelevant for the rest of the war. Argentine submarine warfare capability against surface and subsurface ships was below

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<sup>292</sup> Jane's Information Group, "Jane's Weapon Systems 1980-81," 851.

<sup>293</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 146.

par as well.<sup>294</sup> Argentina had numerous diesel submarines, yet they had not trained and were not proficient in anti-submarine missions. The Argentinean Air Force was also at a disadvantage despite Argentina's relative proximity to the Falkland Islands. The islands were over 400 miles away from the mainland, close to the Argentine Air Force's operational limits, even including air-to-air refueling. If the Argentineans had increased the size and capabilities of the airfield on the islands, this weakness might have been eliminated, assuming that the Argentines could have defended the fields effectively against British attack.

**b. Three Strategies of Warfare**

The Argentinean's had three plans for the Falkland Islands, which were Alpha, Rosario, and Azul. OPLAN Alpha concerned the reinforcement of South Georgia island. OPLAN Rosario involved the Argentine Navy solely taking over the Falkland Islands. OPLAN Azul was the joint plan of all Argentine services attacking the Falkland Islands. Although the Argentineans had thoroughly planned the conquest of the islands, they did not plan Phase IV of their operation, defense against British reaction or what they were going to do once they had physically captured the island.<sup>295</sup> Operation Azul's purpose was to quickly attain a *fait accompli* takeover of the islands, then withdraw all forces forty-eight hours later leaving behind 500 marines and a military governor in order to maintain its credible claims of sovereignty over the islands and prevent a British reoccupation of the islands. The endstate of this operation was to force the British back to the negotiating table and settle the sovereignty issue in Argentina's favor.<sup>296</sup>

Argentina's original plan called for the invasion of the Falkland Islands to occur between June and October; however due to the Davidoff expedition on South Georgia Island, the timetable had to be sped up.<sup>297</sup> Although Argentina's military capabilities were not at their maximum potential, the Junta decided upon the invasion

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<sup>294</sup> Speller, *Delayed Reaction: UK Maritime Expeditionary Capabilities and the Lessons of the Falklands Conflict*, 367.

<sup>295</sup> Finlan, *War Culture: The Royal Navy and the Falklands Conflict*, 214.

<sup>296</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 152.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

anyways because they did not expect a major military response and the final solution was expected to have been through further negotiations.<sup>298</sup> Argentina also suffered from keeping its best military forces on the mainland to counter the Chilean threat and unsynchronized battle plans. The various military forces plans following the invasion were not synchronized, the overall air campaign was not coordinated and synchronized with Argentine Army defense requirements on the islands.<sup>299</sup>

Huth noted that “a defending state needs the military capacity to respond quickly and in strength to a range of military contingencies, and thus be able to deny the attacker its military objectives at the outset or very early strategies of an armed offensive.”<sup>300</sup> Britain was only prepared to fight a war of attrition in Europe. It did not have any military plans or threat-inducing capability for out-of-area operations. Britain had systematically decreased its capabilities in the South Atlantic area from 1967 to 1982. Nott Defense Review solidified Britain’s decreased capabilities along the lines prescribed by its commitment to NATO. In the process, it also demonstrated that Britain did not have a credible threat against a potential Argentinean aggression.

## C. CONCLUSION

Britain was unable to politically and militarily deter Argentine aggressiveness because it had an ambiguous stance towards the South Atlantic Region, which prevented effective planning and leveraging of credible threats to protect its interests. War broke out between Britain and Argentina over the Falkland Islands for two additional reasons. The first is that Britain did not believe Argentine threats to reacquire the islands by force if necessary. This resulted in unresponsive and unclear policy. The second reason is that Argentina believed that Britain would accept a military takeover of the islands. This led the disgruntled Argentineans to believe that they could settle this dispute by force since negotiations were not going anywhere.<sup>301</sup> Patrick Morgan claims that “a severe conflict

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<sup>298</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 157.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>300</sup> Paul K. Huth, "Deterrence and International Conflict: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Debates," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999), 30.

<sup>301</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 89.

presumably makes parties more willing to fight; it alters their preferences to make their level of unacceptable damage higher so it takes more to deter them. A severe conflict expands the parties' emotional intensity, making rational calculation less likely or appealing."<sup>302</sup> A sense of "severe conflict" certainly seems to have existed in the minds of Argentina's leadership from 1976-1982. No similar sense of severity seems to have existed in London until the onset of war itself, however. The political atmosphere in Argentina, in which successive military Juntas legitimized themselves chiefly with reference to the prestige (and repressive power) of the armed forces, severely restricted Argentina's face-saving options when it discovered that Britain would fight to maintain sovereignty over the disputed islands. Their planning process took into account the best case scenarios, without considering how events might unfold if their assumptions turned out to be incorrect.

On the British side, the cumulative effect of the unsynchronized and shifting defense priorities, dominated by the need to sustain Britain's role in NATO, severely limited the options available to Britain in response Argentinean aggressive acts. Thus, Britain's failure to plan a coherent deterrence policy forced it take a risky military venture that had severe political consequences both at home and abroad. In the end, conventional deterrence based upon an unambiguous threat of military force was not attempted by Britain until March 29, 1982 when it ordered a submarine with support vessels to the South Atlantic.<sup>303</sup> This action was already too late, as the correct time for conventional deterrence had already come and gone.

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<sup>302</sup> Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 29.

<sup>303</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 90.

## **V. PSYCHOLOGY, CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE, AND THE FALKLAND ISLANDS**

*To many men much-wandering hope comes as a boon, but to many others  
it is the deception of vain desires.*

Sophocles, *Antigone*<sup>304</sup>

In addition to the politico-military aspects of deterrence, one must consider the psychological aspects of conventional deterrence failure and their contribution to the onset of the Falkland Islands War. One of the central tenets of conventional deterrence is that international actors behave and act in a rational manner. The role of perception is equally critical. Both rationality and perception impact the issuance and reception of signals meant to deter certain actions from occurring. These and other related psychological components are important determinants of the success or failure of conventional deterrence. This chapter argues that psychological factors based upon the rational actor model prevented Britain from formulating a coherent policy and military posture that could threaten Argentina from taking unwanted actions.

### **A. RATIONALITY**

Britain's conduct in the years preceding the Falklands war was undoubtedly rational, within any common-sense meaning of that word. Yet that does not refute the fact that Britain had conflicting goals or desired outcomes throughout the entire history of the conflict. One goal was to come to a negotiated settlement with Argentina over the sovereignty issue of the Falkland Islands. The other was to ensure the self-determination of the Falkland Islanders and their right to choose the government under which they wanted to live. A third goal (post invasion) was to not let naked armed aggression go unpunished. The Falkland Islands became an important issue in 1960 and 1965 when Argentina successfully lobbied the UN General Assembly to get the Falkland Islands listed as a global decolonization issue. The Assembly passed Resolutions 1514 and

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<sup>304</sup> As cited in: Steven Stavropoulos, *The Wisdom of the Ancient Greeks: Timeless Advice on the Senses, Society, and the Soul* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003), 116.



2065<sup>305</sup> specifically calling on both Britain and Argentina to come to a negotiated settlement over the Falklands Islands regardless of the will or needs to the islands population. For the British, the issue of sovereignty surrounding the islands was inextricably linked to the concept of self-determination of a people and the international community trying to force the abandonment of a people under the guise of decolonization.<sup>306</sup> The UNGA Resolutions and international pressure are what set the two states on a conflictual collision course that would eventually lead to war.

Given these two conflictual goals and values, Britain began pursuing courses of action that attempted to bring the Falkland Islanders closer to understanding, and potentially accepting, future Argentine sovereignty. This last issue is particularly important, as the Falkland Islanders were British citizens. In moving towards these goals, Britain signed numerous logistical agreements with Argentina to render medical, educational, and other support to the islands. Britain even attempted to ignore numerous Argentine aggressive actions in order to maintain and keep negotiations open, because it viewed negotiations as a means for weaning both the Argentineans and the islanders off of their extreme positions in a type of “educational exercise.”<sup>307</sup> In this effort, they believed they could successfully resolve the conflict between the two states. Yet, at no point did Britain express that it would protect the islanders interests with military action if necessary.

Argentina also pursued its goal of reacquiring lost territory from the British in a rational manner. Their aim was always the same: to regain sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the subsidiary islands and maintain regional hegemony over the South Atlantic. The Argentineans pursued multiple courses of action in order to attain this goal. As mentioned earlier, it had successfully lobbied around the world to have the Falkland Islands situation labeled as a decolonization issue despite the fact that the islanders were

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<sup>305</sup> "UN General Assembly Resolutions 15d Session," <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/15/ares15.htm> (accessed 10/25/2009)., "UN General Assembly Resolutions 20th Session," <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/20/ares20.htm> (accessed 10/25/2009).

<sup>306</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 3.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 79.

British citizens. It sought to test British resolve by slowly escalating the conflict, beginning with the *RSS Shackleton* incident. The Argentine Navy fired upon the *RSS Shackleton*, a British research ship, while it was attempting to determine the economic potential of the region in terms of resource exploitation.<sup>308</sup> This was followed by the occupation of South Thule Island in December 1976.<sup>309</sup> It was during this time period that Argentina's navy began chasing Bulgarian and Russian fishing trawlers out of disputed waters in overt demonstrations that supported its claim to sovereignty within the region and disputed territories.<sup>310</sup> Subsequent to these actions, Argentina had planned to take over another South Sandwich Island when Britain returned to the negotiations table in 1977.<sup>311</sup> From 1977 until 1981, Argentina pursued a policy of negotiation as it believed that was the most effective means to rationally attain its goal of reacquiring the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas). Once this process had failed, Argentina decided to pursue other courses of action to include the use of force in recovering the islands. When Davidoff and his party landed on South Georgia Island in 1982 and refused to comply with British regulations about ports of entry, the Argentine Junta believed the time was ripe for taking the military action that it had planned for later in the year.

## **B. PERCEPTION AND COGNITIVE DISSONANCE: BRITAIN AND ARGENTINA**

The rational actor model is helpful in understanding British and Argentinean actions that led to conventional deterrence failure. Yet, it is not a sufficient explanation for why Britain was unable to create credible threats to counter act Argentine aggression. Nor does it explain why, when it became apparent that Britain was willing to go to war over the Falkland Islands, Argentina did not back down in "mea culpa" fashion. This section of the chapter argues that these two rational actors (Britain and Argentina) had

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<sup>308</sup> T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 163.

<sup>309</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 77.

<sup>310</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 151.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 163–164.

radically different perceptions of the conflict, arising in part from various forms of cognitive dissonance about what was really going on.

## **1. Perceptions**

Britain had significantly different perceptions of the Falkland Islands Conflict from those of Argentina. They believed that negotiations were actually discussions to bring the islanders and Argentina closer together, and shift them away from their extremist viewpoints<sup>312</sup>; They also believed that Argentina would not attack the Falkland Islands outright without a highly visible military buildup. This first perception was shaped by two biases. Britain wanted to be a leader within the international community and adhere to its dictates (the UN resolutions), while protecting the islander's rights to self-determination (a basic tenet of the UN Charter). These biases increased the government's cognitive dissonance as events progressed in unexpected ways.

Britain's need to protect the islands was inherently difficult to reconcile with its obviously limited practical means of doing so, at least in the short run. This seems to have contributed to the (unduly reassuring) assumption that any Argentine attack would be preceded by a visible military buildup. Britain's logistical lines to the Falkland Islands were over 8,000 miles long. It needed to believe that Argentina would need time to assemble naval and army occupation units. This preparation time was supposed to give Britain time to develop a course of action that it had failed to develop at its leisure during the long years leading up to the final crisis.

Britain's assumption, that a snap decision by Argentina to seize the islands was impossible, meant that during the crisis month of March 1982 it was primarily concerned about a miscalculated escalation that would lead to war. Its hesitancy and apparent lack of resolve merely strengthened the Junta's belief that Britain had neither the capability nor the will power to force them off the Falkland Islands. This lack of resolve was

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<sup>312</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 79.

demonstrated when the *HMS Endurance* did not forcibly remove the Argentineans from South Georgia Island in 1982, at which point the British government effectively ceded the initiative to the Argentineans.<sup>313</sup>

Argentina's perception that Britain would not militarily respond to its occupation of the Falkland Islands resulted from a complex interaction of motivated and unmotivated biases. These are best summed up by two of Christopher Mitchell's four models of ripeness for conflict resolution: "the Hurting Stalemate (HS)," and the "Entrapment model (ENT)."<sup>314</sup> The HS model describes conditions in which "no party can envision a successful outcome through continuing current strategies, nor an end to increasingly unbearable costs."<sup>315</sup> The ENT model describes conditions under which "leaders become trapped into a continued pursuit of 'victory', even after the costs seem...to be 'unbearable.' Underlying this second model is an apparently irrational process by which 'costs' become transferred into 'investments' in a conflict that cannot be given up for anything less than complete victory."<sup>316</sup> Argentina believed itself to have been caught in one version or another of these two scenarios since 1833.

## **2. Cognitive Dissonance**

Cognitive dissonance also played a role in the Falkland Islands conflict. Griffin defines cognitive dissonance as "the distressing mental state in which people 'find themselves doing things that don't fit with what they know, or having opinions that do not fit with other opinions they hold.'"<sup>317</sup> British policy and actions suffered from this phenomenon. Britain refused to consider the sovereignty issue over the Falkland Islands before 1960 and barely acknowledged the UN resolutions about the Falklands until the

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<sup>313</sup> Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, Johns Hopkins Paperbacks ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 111–112.

<sup>314</sup> Christopher Mitchell, "The Right Moment: Notes on Four Models of 'Ripeness'," *Paradigms* 9, no. 2 (Winter 1995), 38–39.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>317</sup> Em Griffin, "Cognitive Dissonance Theory of Leon Festinger," in *A First Look at Communications Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), [http://www.afirstlook.com/main.cfm/theory\\_resources/Cognitive\\_Dissonance](http://www.afirstlook.com/main.cfm/theory_resources/Cognitive_Dissonance) (accessed 10/17/2009).

early 1970s. One of the Britain's primary reasons for at least examining the sovereignty issue was that logistical resupply of the island had become more expensive. Britain wanted to shift the economic burden of the islands onto the Argentine government, maintain sovereignty over the islands, and still appear to be in compliance with the various UN resolutions. However, this attempt at burden shifting sent the British onto the path of cognitive dissonance. The Argentineans perceived that the British were finally willing to discuss handing over sovereignty of the islands to Argentina, when the political realities within Britain would not accept this. The British kept the Falkland Islands because its citizens were British and refused to be anything else.<sup>318</sup> As time progressed, Britain became unwilling to unilaterally muster resources to support the islands without Argentina, and simultaneously unwilling to tell the islanders that they were going to have to accept Argentine sovereignty over the islands.<sup>319</sup> Thus, Britain built its own quagmire by giving the Argentineans hope about recovering the lost islands when it was unwilling and incapable of doing so. These inherent contradictions within the situation grew progressively worse as Argentine impatience and hostility increased

Argentine cognitive dissonance stemmed from colonial disputes between Britain and Spain over the ownership of the islands. When Argentina gained independence, it maintained Spain's claims over the islands despite British possession of them. Its successive governments imagined that this remote and morally irrelevant historical circumstance constituted some kind of "legal" right to rule a place whose inhabitants were in fact the subjects of another country. The Argentineans did not understand the depth of the islander's nationalism towards Britain, nor the international implications of its demands upon the British and its effects upon other British territories. Once going down this path, however, it was difficult to turn back. Each successive government from 1960 onward had made the recovery of the islands a national topic. By 1982, the Falkland Islands were as much a part of Argentine national identity<sup>320</sup> as Alsace-Lorraine was to the French, despite the fact that virtually no one from Argentina had ever been there.

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<sup>318</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, 18.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 18.

By 1982, two very different cognitive contexts were at play in the Falkland Islands conflict. The Argentineans viewed the British occupation as an intolerable national insult. The British on the other hand did not view that Falkland Islands as a decolonization issue at all, since the citizens on the islands were incontestably British. Any use of force against the island would accordingly be an act of aggression, not national liberation.<sup>321</sup>

*a. Defensive Avoidance*

Both states suffered from defensive avoidance, which occurs when a policy maker searches for options other than the current course of action, and cannot find any. This results in psychological stress and the subsequent abandonment of hope for finding a better strategy, which leads to the avoidance of “fear arousing warnings.”<sup>322</sup> There are “three forms of defensive avoidance: 1) procrastination; 2) shifting responsibility for the decision; 3) bolstering.”<sup>323</sup> Bolstering is when a policy maker commits himself to the least objectionable alternative and proceeds to exaggerate its positive consequences and minimize its negative ones.”<sup>324</sup> Bolstering is dangerous because it allows the decision maker to ignore the negative consequences of his decision and actions. Two significant conditions must exist for defensive avoidance to play a major role in conflict management. The first is that “a state of relatively high decisional conflict resulting from two clashing types of threat that make easy resolution impossible. [The second is] the loss of hope finding a better solution than the defective ones already considered.”<sup>325</sup>

This was the case for Britain in 1982. Because of the difficulty in accomplishing the British policy towards a negotiated settlement with Argentina over the Falkland Islands and the need to protect the Falkland Islanders desire for self-determination, the Thatcher government sought to avoid any decision on the conflict

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<sup>321</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 114–117.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 103–104.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 106.

altogether.<sup>326</sup> This decisional handicap was reinforced by the Falkland Islands lobby and its influence within the British government. The islanders' lobby made it almost impossible to put pressure on them to accept Argentinean sovereignty or move back to England.<sup>327</sup> The British government was thus unwilling and unable to force the islanders to accept Argentinean sovereignty, and also to tell the Argentinean government that the issue of sovereignty was no longer negotiable. The latter decision would have forced the British government to garrison a significant force on the islands to deter Argentina from trying to forcefully occupy it.<sup>328</sup> Lebow succinctly states the quagmire in which Britain found itself:

The British sense of helplessness in the South Atlantic seems to have elicited all three forms of defensive avoidance. The overall British policy objective of keeping negotiations alive was in effect a form of procrastination designed to postpone the need to make a choice between the Scylla of islander interests and the Charybdis of Argentine nationalism. It can also be seen as an attempt by the Thatcher government to avoid altogether the responsibility for such a decision by passing it on to their successors. Finally, the government and intelligence community engaged in Bolstering. They convinced themselves that the course of action to which they were committed would succeed and became insensitive to information that indicated otherwise.<sup>329</sup>

The Junta also suffered from severe defensive avoidance. From 1976 onward, they had executed a policy of terror at home and aggressive military expansion that had destroyed the economy and their base of support. One of the few issues in which they appeared strong and had public support was the idea of recovering the Falkland Islands. This issue had become a national obsession and the Junta portrayed themselves as the ones who would accomplish this task.<sup>330</sup> By early 1982, the Junta had put themselves into a position from which they could not voluntarily back down. Britain might have helped them, had it assembled a naval armada of sufficient magnitude to alter

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<sup>326</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 104–105.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>329</sup> As cited in: Ibid., 106–107.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 109.

the cost/ benefit calculus on the Argentine side, but it had no wish to do so lest it inadvertently provoke a violent response. The size and strength of a large naval armada might have given the Argentine leadership sufficient excuse to back down and save face.<sup>331</sup> One way in which deterrence succeeds is by giving the other side an acceptable reason to show passivity without losing face.

As part of defensive avoidance, the Junta failed to recognize and ignored information that demonstrated they were dealing with a state that was insensitive to its internal needs and dilemmas. The British government was oblivious to the storms brewing in Argentina and the despair accumulating within the Argentine Junta over domestic unrest. Thus, the Junta also displayed defensive avoidance in that it did not want to be overthrown by its own people. Yet, even after the invasion and the British response to it, it concluded that the situation had progressed too far for it to back down and survive.<sup>332</sup>

#### ***b. Selective Exposure***

As a result of the worsening effects of defensive avoidance, both states began a campaign of selective exposure to certain types of information. Both states tended to discount or “avoid information that [was] likely to increase [their] dissonance.”<sup>333</sup> This led them to discount information that contradicted their situational assumptions and only accept information that reinforced them. In 1982, Britain’s cognitive dissonance was so severe that it appeared to require positive proof of Argentinean intent to take action prior to considering any potential threats as serious.<sup>334</sup> This is despite the fact that Britain had cracked the Argentinean diplomatic code in 1979.<sup>335</sup> The subsequent degradation of relations should have alerted Britain to the possibility of an Argentine attack.

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<sup>331</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 109.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 109–110.

<sup>333</sup> Griffin, *Cognitive Dissonance Theory of Leon Festinger*.

<sup>334</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 100.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 91.



### C. SIGNALS

Signals are a very important component of conventional deterrence. If a state can give clear signals of its intentions and threats, deterrence is likely to be maintained. Nevertheless, even clear signals are liable to be interpreted in ways other than those intended by the sender.

Prior to the Falklands War, British governments had little interest in the islands. As a result of this limited interest, the British never sent clear signals about its intentions to maintain the islands and Britain did not detail nor plan for forces to protect the Islands in time of crisis. The British government was, if anything, too willing to discuss the sovereignty issue.<sup>336</sup> The removal of the *HMS Endurance* from the South Atlantic took away Britain's last remaining presence in the region; and the perceived trip wire for conflict, from Argentina's perspective, was therefore withdrawn. The revocation of automatic British citizenship to the Falkland Islanders also signaled a shift from that of direct deterrence (protection of native soil) to extended deterrence (protection of a third party.) Extended deterrence is much more difficult sustain. Finally, with British proposed plans to close the British Antarctic Survey Base on South Georgia Island,<sup>337</sup> Argentina perceived that Britain was disengaging from the region as a whole.

In 1982, there were many signals of Argentine intentions to reacquire the Falkland Islands by force. Throughout the month of March, the Argentine Junta explicitly stated that it would not rule out any options for regaining the islands. Additionally, Argentine diplomats began dropping hints that if the British did not return to the negotiating table with the intent to cede sovereignty over the islands, the military might be used to get what the negotiations could not. And, finally, the Argentine government gave full protection to the Argentine "squatters" on South Georgia Island by sending three warships to ward off the *HMS Endurance*.<sup>338</sup> After signals intelligence came through the MoD regarding an impending Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands, on

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<sup>336</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 148.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>338</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 108.

31 March 1982, Admiral Leach told the Prime Minister that he could get the British carriers at sea within forty-eight hours and have them link up with the bulk of the fleet operating off of Gibraltar.<sup>339</sup> The British leadership had hoped that this clear signal of intentions and overt threat of military response would prevent the Argentineans from invading the island. However, the British reaction was too little, too late. The Junta needed the recovery of the islands to bolster domestic support and after the invasion, all of Argentina rejoiced about recovering the islands. Even with the British Fleet moving to the South Atlantic, it was not a sufficiently threatening signal of intent because the British military capabilities needed to recapture the islands were thought to be of questionable effectiveness.

#### **D. FEAR**

Fear is a critical element of conventional deterrence. From 1976 to 1982, Britain had consistently failed to instill fear in Argentina. In fact, it was Argentina who instilled fear in Britain and successfully deterred Britain from taking actions contrary to Argentine interests. From 1976 onward, one of Argentina's greatest fears was that Britain would turn to Chile as an ally and potential source of logistical support for the Falkland Islands. Chile had an ongoing dispute with Argentina over the Beagle Islands and the control of the Beagle Channel. Given Chilean control over the Beagle Islands, Argentina feared that Chile in turn might aid the British in providing logistical support to the Falkland Islands, which would decrease Argentina's influence within the region and make reacquiring the islands even more difficult.<sup>340</sup> After the very serious incidents in 1976, Britain could have developed closer relations to Chile to heighten Argentine fears of unacceptable losses and deter further attempts at aggression within the South Atlantic Region. This type of action had the added advantage of forcing the Argentineans to accept negotiations as a form of dialogue between the islanders and the Argentine government with the goal of increasing mutual understanding and trust between the two parties. This mutual trust

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<sup>339</sup> John Nott, "A View from the Centre," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 58.

<sup>340</sup> Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 5.

could have led to Argentina peaceably reacquiring the Falkland Islands while allaying the islander's fears about being thrown into the grip of a dictatorship.

In spite of Argentine fears about losing influence within the region, Argentina successfully instilled the fear of unacceptable losses within Britain until 1982. From 1976 to 1982, Britain was afraid of having to commit more resources to protecting the Falkland Islands. Until 1980, it was politically and militarily less expensive for Britain to negotiate with Argentina. Argentina understood this and routinely threatened to stop logistical support to the islands when Britain began to vacillate on the negotiations. Argentina also understood the British fear of having to garrison a large military force in the South Atlantic to protect its interests. Argentine military actions were designed to force the British back to the negotiations table or expend a lot of money and effort to maintain the islands, which Britain was not prepared to do. In 1982, Argentina began aggressive activities to force the British back to the negotiating table because this tactic had always worked in the past.

Long wrote, "if an opponent believes that taking an action that one wishes to deter will set in motion events that may escalate beyond the control of both parties, then uncertainty will make him less likely to take an action."<sup>341</sup> Argentina successfully applied this principle against Britain until the spring of 1982. Britain's fears resulted in their own deterrence because their fears went beyond the evidence of significant destruction.<sup>342</sup> Britain feared having to resume logistical support and local defense of the islands. Their fear allowed subsidiary island occupations, shots fired against British research vessels, and so forth, to go unanswered. Their continued willingness to negotiate over sovereignty simultaneously increased Falkland Islander fears of being pushed into the hands of an oppressive regime.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Austin G. Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of RAND Deterrence Research* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 2008), 9.

<sup>342</sup> Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 63.

<sup>343</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, 15.

## **E. RISK**

Although people try to assess risk rationally, the actual decision to take a risk has other psychological dimensions as well. Long points out that “humans as a rule tend to be risk acceptant when facing loss and risk averse toward gain.”<sup>344</sup> Two important points about risk need to be reemphasized: 1) It is a function of the capabilities of the attacker and defender; 2) it is also a function of the relationship between the military and political implications of going to war.<sup>345</sup> By 1982, the Argentine Junta faced losing its power through domestic troubles and the odds of regaining sovereignty over the Falkland Islands were decreasing. Britain, on the other hand, perceived its risk as no more than that of having to reassume logistical and military support to the islands.

### **1. Attacker/Defender Capabilities**

The respective capabilities of both Britain and Argentina were very important in determining what level of risk each state was willing to accept within the conflict. In the late 1970s, the British Chiefs of Staff determined that the type of military presence needed to deter aggression vis-à-vis the Falkland Islands would be “very expensive and would engage a significant portion of the country’s naval resources... [and] its dispatch could precipitate the very action it was intended to deter.”<sup>346</sup> Britain was also not willing to risk antagonizing Argentina and being forced to resume full logistical support for the Falkland Islands. However, the nature of risk in the conflict significantly changed for the British in March 1982. Although British capabilities in the region were non-existent prior to the invasion, the Thatcher government faced a very significant risk of losing power if it did not respond to the Argentine invasion. In trying to reoccupy the islands with an ad hoc force that was not designed for expeditionary warfare, Britain risked losing a war to a third world regional power, further decreasing its already poor self image, and putting the future of the Thatcher government in jeopardy.

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<sup>344</sup> Long, *Deterrence: From Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of Rand Deterrence Research*, 9.

<sup>345</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 64–65.

<sup>346</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, 19.

In late 1981 and early 1982, the Argentine Junta believed that the risk of forcefully occupying the Falkland Islands was low. The Nott Defence Review (1981) had significantly reduced Britain's global capabilities and refocused its efforts upon European commitments. Additionally, Britain's perceived commitment to the region decreased due to the nullification of automatic citizenship to the Falkland Islanders, the removal of *HMS Endurance*, and the proposed closure of the British research station on South Georgia Island. Also, Argentina significantly built up its military capabilities so that it could fight a war of attrition until the international community became involved to end the conflict. Fighting a war of attrition was presumed to favor Argentina due to the relative proximity of the Islands and long logistics lines for Britain to maintain.

## **2. Political Implications of War**

There were significant political risks for both Britain and Argentina in going to war. For Britain, if the Thatcher government had not gone to war, it would have fallen. Therefore, the "long-shot" option of a naval fight was viewed as necessary to maintain its power. The military risk was certain; however, Prime Minister Thatcher took numerous steps to reduce the political risks of going to war. The Suez Crisis of 1956 was very important for the British because it taught them four important lessons that Thatcher applied during the Falklands Crisis. These four lessons were: "1) We should not get into a military operation unless we were determined and able to finish it; 2) We should never again find ourselves on the opposite side to the United States in a major international crisis affecting Britain's interests; 3) We should ensure that our actions were in accord with international law; 4) He who hesitates is lost."<sup>347</sup>

Britain's decision to fight forced them to take into account the dearth of logistics facilities between Britain and the Falkland Islands, Argentine weapons systems and their capabilities, and whether or not other states would abide by agreed upon sanctions against

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<sup>347</sup> As cited in: Alistair Finlan, "War Culture: The Royal Navy and the Falklands Conflict," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 229.

Argentina.<sup>348</sup> Thus, throughout March and April of 1982, the British government actively sought international and U.S. support condemning Argentina's aggression against the Falkland Islands. Not only did the U.S. not remain neutral in the conflict, it actively supported the British with weapons and logistics. Also, the United Nations Security Council voted two resolutions condemning Argentina's naked aggression and supporting Britain's attempt to reverse Argentina's activities. Thus, through Britain's hard work, the political risk was ultimately managed very effectively in Britain's favor. Both of the governments that went to war over the Falklands believed that their own political future was at stake in the conflict. It was the British, in the end, who were able to insure more effectively against this risk.

Nevertheless, it remains true that Britain was unable to formulate a coherent policy capable of deterring Argentine aggression in the South Atlantic. As Lawrence Freedman said, "the most striking feature of British policy... was the decision to make it more difficult to cope with a confrontation should one arise, and to do so in a highly visible manner."<sup>349</sup> Britain's ambivalence and passivity were reinforced by political and economic conditions that seemed to limit its options even further, and strengthened the Argentine perception that they in fact had the upper hand.<sup>350</sup> This perceptual distortion on the Argentinean side ultimately caused them to go to war. The apparent "lack of British resolve, the difficulty of recapturing the Falklands, expectations of U.S. neutrality, and differing cognitive conceptions of the controversy, were rationalizations for a policy to which the generals were committed [anyway]."<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Lawrence Freedman, "The Impact of the Falkland Islands Conflict on International Affairs," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 10–11.

<sup>349</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, 19.

<sup>350</sup> Jervis, Lebow and Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, 101.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

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## VI. CREDIBILITY AND REPUTATION

*Words are but the shadows of actions.*

Democritus<sup>352</sup>

Up until now, the discussion on the Falkland Islands War (1982) has primarily focused upon the political, military, and psychological aspects of conventional deterrence. These three elements are critical ingredients to the success or failure of conventional deterrence because their combination impacts a state's behavior and has a direct impact upon the credibility of threats to instill a fear of unacceptable losses. To reiterate, Daryl Press claimed the following points about credibility: "1) it is a perception; 2) it is not tangible; 3) credibility of a threat is not synonymous with seriousness of a threat. The seriousness surrounding a threat is directly related to the cost of the threat."<sup>353</sup> Thus, the essence of a credible threat is that it must be believed.<sup>354</sup>

This chapter will cover the concepts of credibility and reputation within conventional deterrence. It argues that Britain's unclear policy and military capabilities created doubt within Argentina about Britain's ability to threaten, thwart, and deter its plans for taking over the islands. This will be explained through four related ideas: 1) central/ extended deterrence; 2) immediate/ general deterrence; 3) denial and punishment; 4) reputation.

### A. CENTRAL (BASIC)/EXTENDED DETERRENCE

The credibility of central (basic) and extended deterrence is important because of its direct impact upon the credibility of British threats. Basic deterrence protects the state and its territory, whereas extended deterrence protects a third party's territory or interests. In the early 1970s, Britain treated the Falklands as an extended deterrence issue.

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<sup>352</sup> As cited in: Steven Stavropoulos, *The Wisdom of the Ancient Greeks: Timeless Advice on the Senses, Society, and the Soul* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003), 116.

<sup>353</sup> Daryl Grayson Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2005), 10–11.; The cost of a threat will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>354</sup> Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15.



Extended deterrence and threats associated with it are the most difficult to make credible due to a perceived view of the object not being a core value to the deterrer.

From 1976 to 1982, British actions undermined the credibility of its commitment by ignoring Argentine aggression, as demonstrated by: 1) Britain's failure to forcefully react to Argentine warships firing upon the *RSS Shackleton*; 2) acceptance of Argentine hostile fire upon Russian and Bulgarian fishing trawlers; 3) Britain's failure to forcefully expel Argentine occupation forces on South Thule Island. Even Britain's lone attempt at "conventional deterrence" (1977) did not have a significant effect because the British kept their naval movements a secret for fear of aggravating the Argentines. As mentioned in the previous chapter, deterrence signals must be overt and to the point, and Britain's feeble attempt did not satisfy this requirement. Additionally, after negotiations broke down; Britain did not reinforce the islands defenses nor did it increase the number of naval cruises in the area to symbolize at a minimum its position of extended deterrence.

## **B. IMMEDIATE/GENERAL DETERRENCE**

To briefly review, immediate deterrence is when there is an active consideration of attack by the deteree and general deterrence is when the possibility of attack exists.<sup>355</sup> Until 1976, Argentina did not pose a significant military threat to the Falkland Islands. Britain still had its tiered system of deterrence that encapsulated the South Atlantic and the Royal Navy was of sufficient size to credibly threaten the lower-grade Argentine Navy. Thus, the claim can be made that Argentina was generally deterred.

A turning point in British-Argentinean relations came in 1976.. Beginning with the attack on the *RSS Shackleton*, Britain needed to reassess its deterrence focus in the South Atlantic Ocean in light of these overt hostilities. With the attack on the *RSS Shackleton*, Argentina had signaled its intent to reassert its sovereignty by force within the region and over the disputed territories. These actions were followed up by attacks on foreign fishing trawlers and the occupation of South Thule Island. Although the Falkland

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<sup>355</sup> Paul K. Huth, "Deterrence and International Conflict: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Debates," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999), 16.

Islands' security was not threatened, British sovereign rights in the region were, and this warranted a more robust deterrence posture to protect British interests against Argentina. Whether or not the general deterrence took the form of central or extended deterrence is immaterial when the initial policy or military steps are not even taken. In fact, Britain's general deterrence position became close to non-existent with the closure of Britain's Bermuda naval base in 1976.

Another decision point year was 1981 when Britain needed to reexamine its conventional deterrence posture within the South Atlantic. In 1980, the lease back option had failed and Britain did not increase any regional conventional deterrence features to once again signal that the Falklands Islands were once more a central deterrence issue to Britain. Four major events in 1981 changed the situation of general deterrence to immediate deterrence: 1) the Falkland Islanders losing their automatic British citizenship; 2) the Nott Defence Review and prioritization of forces on Europe with minimal mention of British protectorates; 3) the planned decommissioning of the HMS Endurance (tripwire, British regional commitment, and deterrent); 4) the Galtieri Junta in Argentina.

By March 1982, Britain was beyond enacting immediate conventional deterrence, the situation had transitioned to compellance. Compellance is different from deterrence because a threat is applied to the opponent until it acts and ceases the undesired activity.<sup>356</sup> The situation in the South Atlantic had deteriorated to the point where conventional deterrence was no longer viable. The Davidoff Incident was the proverbial "line in the sand" in which Argentina could no longer be deterred from taking aggressive actions against British interests, it had to be compelled to stop.

### **C. DENIAL/PUNISHMENT**

Britain's ability to deny Argentina its objectives and punish it for its attempts was in question during 1982. This led the Argentineans to believe they were near-peer regional competitors with Britain and that they had the local military superiority to fight

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<sup>356</sup> Michael Keane, *Dictionary of Modern Strategy and Tactics* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 43.

and win a swiftly executed campaign against the Falkland Islands before the British could react. Numerous other important states in the international system believed in Britain's decreased capability as well.

The ability to deny an opponent a quick *fait accompli* is an important cornerstone to conventional deterrence. After Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal and Britain's inability to unilaterally deny and punish Egypt for its actions, Britain set about rebuilding its military infrastructure.<sup>357</sup> Its military and naval capability peaked in 1966, a year after UN General Assembly resolution 2065 was passed calling upon Britain to negotiate the issue of the Falkland Islands. Britain's deference to the UN became the first step in its inability to deny Argentina its objective of retrieving the Falkland Islands. The next step was a slow but sure decrease in military expeditionary capability that culminated with Nott's Defence Review in 1981.

The *RSS Shackleton* (1976) incident demonstrated Britain's inability to deny or even threaten to deny Argentine activities in the South Atlantic Ocean. As a result, Britain was forced to garrison Royal Marines on the Falkland Islands as a measure of minimal deterrence.<sup>358</sup> In reality, the Royal Marines became a trip wire event as their numbers with limited naval capability in the region were insufficient to force the Argentines off of South Thule Island in 1976-77 and off of South Georgia Island in 1982.

The British military recognized its growing inability to deny Argentinean objectives in the late 1970s and the increasing difficulty of punishing Argentina for future acts of aggression. In 1977, the British Chiefs of Staff determined that the type of military presence needed to deter Argentine aggression would be prohibitively expensive and would require naval resources that were needed for the defense of Europe.<sup>359</sup> As this last option was ruled out, they also questioned their ability to punish Argentina should

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<sup>357</sup> Ian Speller, "Delayed Reaction: UK Maritime Expeditionary Capabilities and the Lessons of the Falklands Conflict," *Defense & Security Analysis* 18, no. 4 (December, 2002), 364–365.

<sup>358</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 56.

<sup>359</sup> Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 19.

they attack the Falkland Islands. It was determined that “to get such a force to the South Atlantic...would take at least twenty days and probably longer, given the need to assemble and prepare. If it arrived after the Islands had been occupied there could be no certainty that they could be retaken.”<sup>360</sup>

One alternative that would have threatened Argentina by denying them their objectives while instilling significant fear was a potential liaison between Chile and Britain. A closer relationship between Britain and Chile would have created an effective threat to deny and punish Argentina over its aggressive activities in the South Atlantic Ocean. Yet, this type of action was not taken because of British fears about having to resume logistical support for the islands.

The Nott Defence Review made a huge impression upon Argentina and its perceptions of Britain’s ability to deny and punish aggressive activity against the Falkland Islands. Despite Britain’s amount of defense spending, its all volunteer force, and extensive military weaponry; it had some severe disadvantages as well. Britain’s logistical supply lines were over 8,000 miles distant and it also did not have any conventional aircraft carriers equipped with land-based aircraft capabilities of AEW and ground attack. This last capability would have significantly changed Argentina’s perception of Britain’s ability to punish it.<sup>361</sup>

Argentina also had weakness in its war-fighting capability. The distance of the Falkland Islands to the Argentinean mainland required significant air-to-air refueling for strike aircraft. Having failed to extend the runway, the Argentine Air Force had very little linger time over their objectives reducing their overall effectiveness.<sup>362</sup> The other

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<sup>360</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, 19. This assessment was made when the British still maintained their last conventional aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal which had land based aircraft capabilities and Airborne Early Warning systems that were sorely missing during the Falkland Islands War. This is another example of how the various ministry’s within Britain exhibited cognitive dissonance regarding the their perceived capabilities and what they were really capable of doing.

<sup>361</sup> Speller, *Delayed Reaction: UK Maritime Expeditionary Capabilities and the Lessons of the Falklands Conflict*, 368.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 367; T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 153.

weakness was the lack of Argentine ASW capability.<sup>363</sup> As the Nott Defence Review reinforced, anti-submarine warfare was the Royal Navy's contribution to NATO.<sup>364</sup> Thus, Britain could effectively deny Argentine naval movements (both surface and submarine) throughout the South Atlantic Ocean during time of war. In fact during the execution of the war, British forces successfully denied Argentina the use of its navy (to include the Argentinean conventional aircraft carrier *ARA Veinticinco de Mayo*) by sinking the heavy cruiser *ARA General Belgrano*. This action both demonstrated British denial and punishment against Argentine naval activity and Argentina's inability to counter the British threat.

In trying to resolve the Argentinean use of force, Britain no longer had the denial option; but, it could punish (or at least attempt to) the Argentine decision to invade the Falkland Islands. A decision had to be made on how badly to punish Argentina and whether or not to give them any face-saving options. Prime Minister Thatcher decided against giving Argentina any face-saving options.<sup>365</sup> This punishment came in the form of a naval force to expel Argentina from the Falkland Islands and the other subsidiary islands. She also set about to alienate and politically deny Argentina any international support for its cause. This was accomplished by getting UN Security Council resolutions passed condemning Argentine aggression and by persuading the United States to support Britain.

#### **D. REPUTATION**

A state's reputation is linked to its credibility. In the Falkland Islands conflict, Britain had continually undermined its credibility and reputation of being tough by not producing any threats to prevent Argentine aggressiveness; then ruthlessly backing them up. In fact, when the going got tough, the British resorted to negotiations to try and settle

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<sup>363</sup> Speller, *Delayed Reaction: UK Maritime Expeditionary Capabilities and the Lessons of the Falklands Conflict*, 367.

<sup>364</sup> White Report, *The United Kingdom Defence Programme: The Way Forward* (London, UK: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, [June 1981]).

<sup>365</sup> Lawrence Freedman, "The Impact of the Falkland Islands Conflict on International Affairs," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 10.

the dispute. The decision to use force went against PM Thatcher's previous emphasis upon negotiations. Her government had the reputation for not using the threat of force to reinforce diplomacy and deterrence.<sup>366</sup> The Argentineans learned this lesson from the events that occurred in 1976. During March and April 1982, many in Parliament did not believe the fleet would have to fight and many more believed the fleet's role was to assist in negotiations for a successful resolution of the conflict.<sup>367</sup> Thus, even as war was about to begin, Britain's reputation of negotiating rather than fighting was being reinforced.

After the invasion, Britain was worried about its reputation and setting a precedence of not reacting. The memory of Munich (1938) was an important factor in Britain's decision to go to war. This is because Britain and other Western powers had ceded land and parts of a state (despite the will and self-determination of the Czechoslovak peoples) to Germany in order to avoid war and maintain peace. The British government was not willing to do this again.<sup>368</sup> Argentina was also worried about its reputation domestically. Although, it was not fully prepared for war in April, the Junta needed to appear strong internationally in order to maintain domestic support.<sup>369</sup>

## **E. CONCLUSION**

The Argentine decision to attack the Falkland Islands and end this dispute was partially caused by Britain's lack of credibility and its reputation for negotiating rather than fighting. Britain never clarified whether or not the Falkland Islands were a national interest that it was prepared to defend militarily. British attempts at deterrence in the 1970s were secretive and therefore useless. Its attempt at immediate deterrence in 1982 should have been a policy of compellance. British policy makers and military leaders believed they did not have the capability to deny Argentine aggression in the South Atlantic despite evidence and options to the contrary. Once acts of aggression were

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<sup>366</sup> Alistair Finlan, "War Culture: The Royal Navy and the Falklands Conflict," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 200.

<sup>367</sup> John Nott, "A View from the Centre," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, eds. Stephan Badsey, Rob Havers and Mark Grove (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2005), 59.

<sup>368</sup> Finlan, *War Culture: The Royal Navy and the Falklands Conflict*, 227–228.

<sup>369</sup> Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, 155.

committed, Britain refused to punish them. All of these credibility issues gave Britain a reputation (within the South Atlantic) for preferring to negotiate rather than fight. All of these factors impacted the cost/ benefit analysis of both Argentina and Britain, which is the subject of the next chapter.

## VII. COST/ BENEFIT CALCULATIONS

*The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run.*

Henry David Thoreau<sup>370</sup>

Traditionally, cost/benefit analysis is associated with the military aspects of deterrence and war. For example, Mearsheimer claimed that cost is directly associated with the speed and success of military action; if the action is successful and fast, the costs of the operation will remain low.<sup>371</sup> Yet, as this thesis has argued thus far, successful conventional deterrence depends upon the synchronization of political and military planning which generates a state's capabilities. It is these capabilities that determine the types and credibility of various threats. It is insufficient to examine only cost/ benefit calculations based upon military aspects of deterrence, as Mearsheimer suggests. Additionally, the cost/ benefit analysis must include the short and long-term impacts of threats.

One basic assumption underlying the cost/ benefit analysis is that effective deterrence makes the two concepts inversely related. As the costs of an object increase, the benefits decrease, and vice versa. Given the relationship between costs and benefits, this chapter will focus upon Britain's political and military ambivalence to the South Atlantic region which failed to convince Argentina that the costs (both long- and short-term) of invading the Falkland Islands far outweighed the benefits. This will be accomplished by examining the cost/ benefit calculus through the political and military lenses developed in Chapter IV.

### A. POLITICAL

Control over the Falkland Islands had both short and long term costs for both the British and Argentineans. For Britain this cost came in the form of international prestige

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<sup>370</sup> Henry David Thoreau, "Cost Quote," <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/cost.html> (accessed 12/27/2009).

<sup>371</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 24.



and leadership regarding liberal ideals such as freedom and democracy. The Argentines claimed that the sovereignty over the Falkland Islands was a decolonization issue and that Britain should give up its claims over the islands. In pursuing this goal, the Argentines attempted to increase the long-term costs of British sovereignty over the islands by gathering support within the UN to identify the Falkland Islands as a decolonization issue. In the 1960-70s, decolonization was a major issue and international pressure was put on all the former colonial powers to decolonize their foreign possessions. Argentina hoped that by increasing the British political costs over maintaining the islands, the benefits of maintaining physical control over them would decrease. However, Argentina failed to recognize the ramifications of any British decision over the sovereignty issues and the overall long-term costs to the British Commonwealth and associated benefits. To be sure, any British decision regarding the Falkland Islands would set a precedent for other British holdings, to include Gibraltar, Belize, and Northern Ireland. Although, the regional short-term costs of the islands for Britain had risen, Argentina had failed to raise Britain's global long-term costs and affect the long-term benefits associated with those costs.

Britain's counter to the decolonization costs was the islander self-determination issue. From the beginning, the Falkland Islanders were British citizens and refused to be anything different. As long as this remained the case, the long-term costs to Argentina remained high with little long-term political benefit in forcefully resolving the matter. This is because one of the United Nations' founding principles was the self-determination of peoples around the world and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Thus, the UN General Assembly resolutions calling upon Britain and Argentina to negotiate the Falkland Islands issue actually runs counter to these foundational principles; therefore the short-term high benefits of the decolonization issue to Argentina could not be turned into long-term costs to Britain.

Britain had also politically kept the short-term Argentinean use of force costs high and benefits low by continuing to negotiate the issue of island sovereignty with Argentina. Starting in 1980, this political cost/ benefit calculus changed due to the failure of the lease back agreement and the withdrawal of automatic citizenship to the Falkland

Islanders. Negotiations ceased to be a mechanism for keeping Argentinean use of force costs high and Britain undercut its argument of protecting its citizens. Thus, the overall costs of Argentine military action had significantly decreased from an Argentinean point of view. This led to the situation in which the perceived low cost of invasion promised the high benefits of regaining the islands.

The second dimension of political costs was the economic concerns of the islands in the form of resource exploitation and logistical support. The Falkland Islands were heavily dependent upon Britain for education, medical care, mail, and transportation, among other things. Despite extensive wool exports to Britain<sup>372</sup>, the physical costs of maintaining the Falkland Islands remained high with perceived low benefits. In the 1970s, Britain attempted to decrease some political costs (decolonization) and economic costs (life support) by contracting services out to Argentina. The benefits to Britain were high as they were able to shift the burden for supporting the islands onto the Argentines and appear to be in compliance with UN mandates.

During the mid-1970s, the possibility of greater resource exploitation (undersea oil and fisheries) began to potentially have a positive impact on the costs of Britain's logistical support for the islands. Consequently, the possibility arose that the economic costs of Britain's retaining sovereignty over the islands were to decrease while significantly increasing its long-term regional economic benefits. However, the Argentines were able to maintain the British at the negotiations table by sustaining Britain's high short-term economic costs through the careful application of credible threats to withhold logistical support to the islands. Until 1981, the British overall costs of maintaining the islands remained high while the overall benefits remain low (despite the potential untapped regional resources.)

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<sup>372</sup> Jane's Military and Security Assessments, "Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - South America: Territories, Falkland Islands," [http://www8.janes.com.libproxy.nps.edu/JDIC/JMSA/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/samsu/falks.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Falkland Islands War 1982&backPath=http://jmsa.janes.com/JDIC/JMSA/search&Prod\\_Name=SAMS&active\(TRUNCATED\)](http://www8.janes.com.libproxy.nps.edu/JDIC/JMSA/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/samsu/falks.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Falkland%20Islands%20War%201982&backPath=http://jmsa.janes.com/JDIC/JMSA/search&Prod_Name=SAMS&active(TRUNCATED)) (accessed 1/29/2010).

Britain did not actively attempt to affect Argentina's cost/ benefit calculations. Given the dispute between Argentina and Chile over the Beagle Channel and associated islands, Britain's use of this quarrel might have been an effective measure to affect Argentina's political and economic costs in the region. The loss of the Beagle Islands severely undercut Argentina's regional influence within the South Atlantic Ocean. Any relationship between Britain and Chile would have significantly increased Argentina's expected costs for achieving regional hegemony and reacquiring the Falkland Islands. Any transfer of costs to Chile would have decreased Britain's reliance on Argentina and reduced its need to negotiate the sovereignty issue over the islands. The overall result would have created a situation in which Argentina would not have gained any benefits from economic threats against the islands. After the Falkland Islands War, Britain did in fact enter into agreements with Chile for logistical support of the islands.<sup>373</sup> If Britain's economic costs could have been effectively dealt with, then Britain could have focused on how to more effectively affect Argentina's military costs of hostile regional activity.

## **B. MILITARY**

Until the Argentine invasion in 1982, Britain considered the military costs of the islands to be high with very little benefit. These costs grew from 1976 onward due to the atrophied South Atlantic British defense structure and ongoing Argentine aggression. Argentina had escalated the overall military costs to the British with each successive aggressive action in the region. When Argentina attacked the *RSS Shackleton*, the British did not have any forces in the area to protect its interests. As a result of this incident, the British stationed a platoon of Royal Marines on the islands.<sup>374</sup> The British increased their short-term costs, while decreasing their benefits from the region as their shipping remained under threat of Argentine intervention. Conversely, Britain did not take any

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<sup>373</sup> Jane's Military and Security Assessments, "Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - South America: Territories, Falkland Islands," [http://www8.janes.com.libproxy.nps.edu/JDIC/JMSA/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/samsu/falks.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Falkland Islands War 1982&backPath=http://jmsa.janes.com/JDIC/JMSA/search&Prod\\_Name=SAMS&active\(TRUNCATED\)](http://www8.janes.com.libproxy.nps.edu/JDIC/JMSA/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/samsu/falks.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Falkland%20Islands%20War%201982&backPath=http://jmsa.janes.com/JDIC/JMSA/search&Prod_Name=SAMS&active(TRUNCATED)) (accessed 1/29/2010).

<sup>374</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 56.

steps to increase Argentine military costs and decreasing their corresponding benefits as well. After the *RSS Shackleton* incident, Britain continued to negotiate the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands without significantly increasing British naval presence in the region to deter further acts of Argentinean aggression. Through ceasing negotiations, Britain could have considerably increased Argentine costs while simultaneously decreasing their benefits by threatening Argentina's stated goal of recovering the islands.

As a result of Britain's insufficient response to the *RSS Shackleton*, the Argentine Junta decided to occupy South Thule Island in late 1976. This move was aimed at increasing the regional costs to Britain by demonstrating its impotence in preventing Argentina's freedom of action. Upon discovering the Argentine occupation force on South Thule Island, Britain could have raised its short-term military costs by sending a reinforced naval unit to the South Atlantic to remove the occupation forces and protect its regional interests. These short-term costs could have been outweighed by the long-term costs and benefits of Britain's demonstration and willingness to use force in protecting its regional interests and not tolerating Argentine aggressiveness. As it stands, Britain earned a reputation of willing to negotiate over going to war which further increased its overall long-term regional costs with associated decreased benefits.

The Nott Defence Review in 1982 also affected the cost/ benefit calculus of both Britain and Argentina. This review simultaneously increased Britain's costs while decreasing Argentina's costs of military activity by bringing the two states parity of forces closer together. This review increased Britain's short and long term global costs by ignoring Britain's lack of sea-based airborne early warning radar capability that conventional carriers offer, downsizing their carrier force to two, scrapping the Royal Navy's amphibious assault ships, and focusing Britain's overall forces upon NATO with only token out-of-area naval cruises. While these decisions were being made, Argentina was building up its military infrastructure and capabilities to decrease its regional military costs. By 1982, Argentina's major military weakness was its non-existent anti-submarine warfare capability. The relative regional parity of forces between Britain and Argentina further decreased Argentine costs for invading the Falklands, while providing a high payoff benefit of domestic support.

### C. CREDIBILITY, REPUTATION, AND COST/BENEFIT

By March 1982, Britain was forced to accept the high short and long-term costs of its previous political and military policies. It had developed a reputation for preferring to negotiate the sovereignty issue rather than upset its political, economic, and military relations with Argentina. This reputation had undercut Britain's regional credibility resulting in automatic high costs to any British activity regarding the Falkland Islands. Thus, on the eve of war, the Thatcher government faced the high costs of losing power by either weakly responding to the invasion or militarily failing to re-conquer the Falkland Islands. On the other hand, Argentine fears of a potential British preemptive action<sup>375</sup> caused them to change their timeline drastically increasing its costs for invading the islands. The original timeline created a situation of a perceived low cost *fait accompli* action that could have succeeded due to Britain's decreased capabilities and high costs to respond. In April 1982, Britain clearly demonstrated that it was willing to fight a war in the South Atlantic and it had gained international support for its cause against Argentina. The Junta's premature action forced them to continue the high cost political and military risks with rapidly decreasing benefits. As it stands, Britain's political and military ambivalence to the South Atlantic region and inattention to the cost/ benefit analysis of the developing situation failed to instill fear in Argentina that the costs (both long and short term) of invading the Falkland Islands far outweighed the benefits.

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<sup>375</sup> Chapter III discussed the reasons behind Argentina moving up its original timeline from October 1982 to April 1982. Parts of the reasons were the Davidoff incident and Argentina's UN Ambassador Costa Mendes' speeches in March 1982.

## VIII. LESSONS ABOUT CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE AND THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

*Folly [is having] bad judgment of affairs, bad counsel, bad fellowship, bad use of one's resources, false opinions about what is fine and good in life. Folly is accompanied by unskillfulness, ignorance, uncontrol, awkwardness, forgetfulness.*

Aristotle<sup>376</sup>

As a result of the Falkland Islands War, Argentina will most likely never see sovereignty over the islands. Britain solidified its commitment to the islands and expanded the existing runway and built another runway to accept military aircraft and logistical support. The Royal Marine element was replaced by an Army company with relevant support package. The Royal Navy has a frigate or destroyer on patrol in the area, an offshore patrol vessel permanently stationed there, the HMS Endurance, and routine unpublicized patrols by nuclear-powered submarines. The Royal Air Force stations on the islands four multi-role combat aircraft, a C-130, aerial refuelers, and airbase protection equipment.<sup>377</sup> All these measures are designed around a policy of deterrence to protect the Falkland Islands and British regional interests.

Another result of the Falkland Islands War is that the islands are now classified as a British overseas territory with their own constitution and have attained a measure of economic independence through regulation of the regions natural resources and exports of wool. Although, the UN Decolonization Council routinely revisits the sovereignty issue of the Falkland Islands, Britain claims self-determination of the islanders and points to their constitution as proof of this fact and to rebuff their interference.<sup>378</sup> Relations

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<sup>376</sup> As cited in: Steven Stavropoulos, *The Wisdom of the Ancient Greeks: Timeless Advice on the Senses, Society, and the Soul* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003), 116.

<sup>377</sup> Jane's Military and Security Assessments, "Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - South America: Territories, Falkland Islands," [http://www8.janes.com.libproxy.nps.edu/JDIC/JMSA/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/samsu/falks.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Falkland Islands War 1982&backPath=http://jmsa.janes.com/JDIC/JMSA/search&Prod\\_Name=SAMS&active\(TRUNCATED\)](http://www8.janes.com.libproxy.nps.edu/JDIC/JMSA/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/samsu/falks.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Falkland%20Islands%20War%201982&backPath=http://jmsa.janes.com/JDIC/JMSA/search&Prod_Name=SAMS&active(TRUNCATED)) (accessed 1/29/2010).

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

between Britain and Argentina continue to be strained because of the status of the islands and their regional resource exploitation. Flare-ups of diplomatic hostility have occurred between Britain and Argentina; these have typically coincided with more conservative governments in Argentina.<sup>379</sup> Overall, post-war British deterrence appears to remain steady due to a concerted and deliberate British effort.

## **A. HYPOTHESIS VALIDITY**

This thesis began with the question: “Why was conventional deterrence unable to prevent interstate armed conflict during the Cold War; and, what lessons can be learned from conventional deterrence failures?” It was hypothesized that “deterrence did not prevent regional conventional wars and conflicts because the deterrer failed to present credible threats that could be used to manipulate the opponent’s behavior, activities, cost/benefit analysis, and instill a fear of unacceptable losses.” In the case of the Falkland Islands, this hypothesis proved correct. Britain failed to produce organized credible threats to manipulate Argentina’s behavior and cost benefit analysis resulting in Britain’s inability to instill a fear of unacceptable losses in Argentina.

The reasons behind Britain’s failure to deter Argentine aggression against the Falkland Islands come from many sources. One source was British political and military planning; it resulted in ambiguous governmental actions that never combined to give the British government opportunities to leverage effective threats against Argentina. Even when Britain wanted to use deterrence, it ineffectively did so as the negligible effects of Britain’s 1977 attempt clearly demonstrates. Britain also did not fully understand how to use deterrence; the crisis in March 1982 demonstrated the need for compellance (forcing Argentina to stop a series of activities) versus Britain’s renewed weak attempt at deterrence to prevent an activity. In early March 1982, only a clear British demonstration

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<sup>379</sup> Jane’s Military and Security Assessments, “Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment - South America: Territories, Falkland Islands,” [http://www8.janes.com.libproxy.nps.edu/JDIC/JMSA/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/samsu/falks.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Falkland Islands War 1982&backPath=http://jmsa.janes.com/JDIC/JMSA/search&Prod\\_Name=SAMS&active\(TRUNCATED\)](http://www8.janes.com.libproxy.nps.edu/JDIC/JMSA/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/samsu/falks.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=Falkland%20Islands%20War%201982&backPath=http://jmsa.janes.com/JDIC/JMSA/search&Prod_Name=SAMS&active(TRUNCATED)) (accessed 1/29/2010).

of its willingness to use force could have prevented war as Argentine military preparations for invasion were already under way; and this did not happen.

Another source of Britain's inability to successfully threaten Argentina came from the psychological limitations accrued by rational actions and policy decisions. Britain failed to acknowledge that it and Argentina had very different perceptions of the issue over the Falkland Islands sovereignty. British refusal to accept that Argentina wanted to reacquire the Falkland Islands by any means necessary derives in part because Britain was wholly unprepared both politically and militarily to invest a significant interest in the islands. This set of situations led to an extreme form of cognitive dissonance within the British government in which as late as March 1982, Britain was still unwilling to accept the facts that Argentina was gearing up to invade the islands.

A third source of British ineffective potential for threats resulted from a lack of credibility and reputation. By 1982 in the South Atlantic, Britain had lost all credibility for protecting the Falkland Islands. It had gained a reputation for preferring to negotiate rather than fight because it refused to threaten or punish Argentina for aggressive actions; despite a British Royal Survey Ship being fired upon and the occupation of South Thule Island. Additionally, after these hostile actions were taken; Britain never issued any threats against Argentina to prevent such actions in the future, resulting in zero British credibility for being able to protect its interests.

The lack of Argentinean beliefs in British credibility and reputation resulted in the fifth source of ineffective threats. Britain never effectively altered Argentina's regional cost/ benefit calculus. Overt acts of deterrence could have accomplished this goal, or improving British/Chilean relations would also have accomplished threatening Argentina's cost/benefit calculus. Instead, Britain's ambiguous political and military policies had a cumulative effect of decreasing Argentina's perceived costs while increasing its benefits. All five sources had a snowballing effect upon Britain's inability to present credible threats to Argentina to either change its behavior and/or its cost/benefit analysis.



## **B. LESSONS LEARNED ON CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE**

There are many lessons to be learned from the Falkland Islands case study in regards to conventional deterrence. One important lesson from this case study harkens back to the policy debates on deterrence discussed in Chapter II. A state that ignores deterrence will in the long run be incapable of effectively issuing threats against an opponent to prevent unwanted behavior from occurring. The planning requirements behind deterrence necessarily require options to be created and thought about. These options create alternative courses of action that differ from the current ones being pursued. Additionally, deterrence theory (regardless of whether or not one believes in it) necessarily forces both political and military planning and their synchronization throughout government, enabling coherence within policy and actions.

Moreover, the options created under a policy of deterrence help reduce the causes and effects of cognitive dissonance. Chapter V put forward the idea that a major source of Britain's cognitive dissonance resulted from that lack of options, which was compounded by defensive avoidance and selective exposure to information. If one works to avoid these pitfalls, it is imperative to build upon solid foundations that deterrence theory and strategy assist in creating.

Credibility and reputation are also important to a state regardless of whether or not they follow a policy of deterrence. Furthermore, the theory and strategy of deterrence presents a guide for states on how to create and maintain its credibility within regions and on issues. But again, it is important to have a clear concise political policy synchronized with appropriate military capabilities from which to create this credibility and reputation. Finally, cost/ benefit analysis is important when tied to credibility and reputation. If a state does not maintain its credibility and reputation then it takes a lot more effort for a state to raise the costs and decrease the benefits of an opponent's actions. A policy of deterrence can be an effective method for affecting the cost/ benefit analysis when attempting to get an opponent to do what we want them to do.

## APPENDIX: MAPS



Figure 1. South Atlantic Ocean<sup>380</sup>

<sup>380</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), xv.

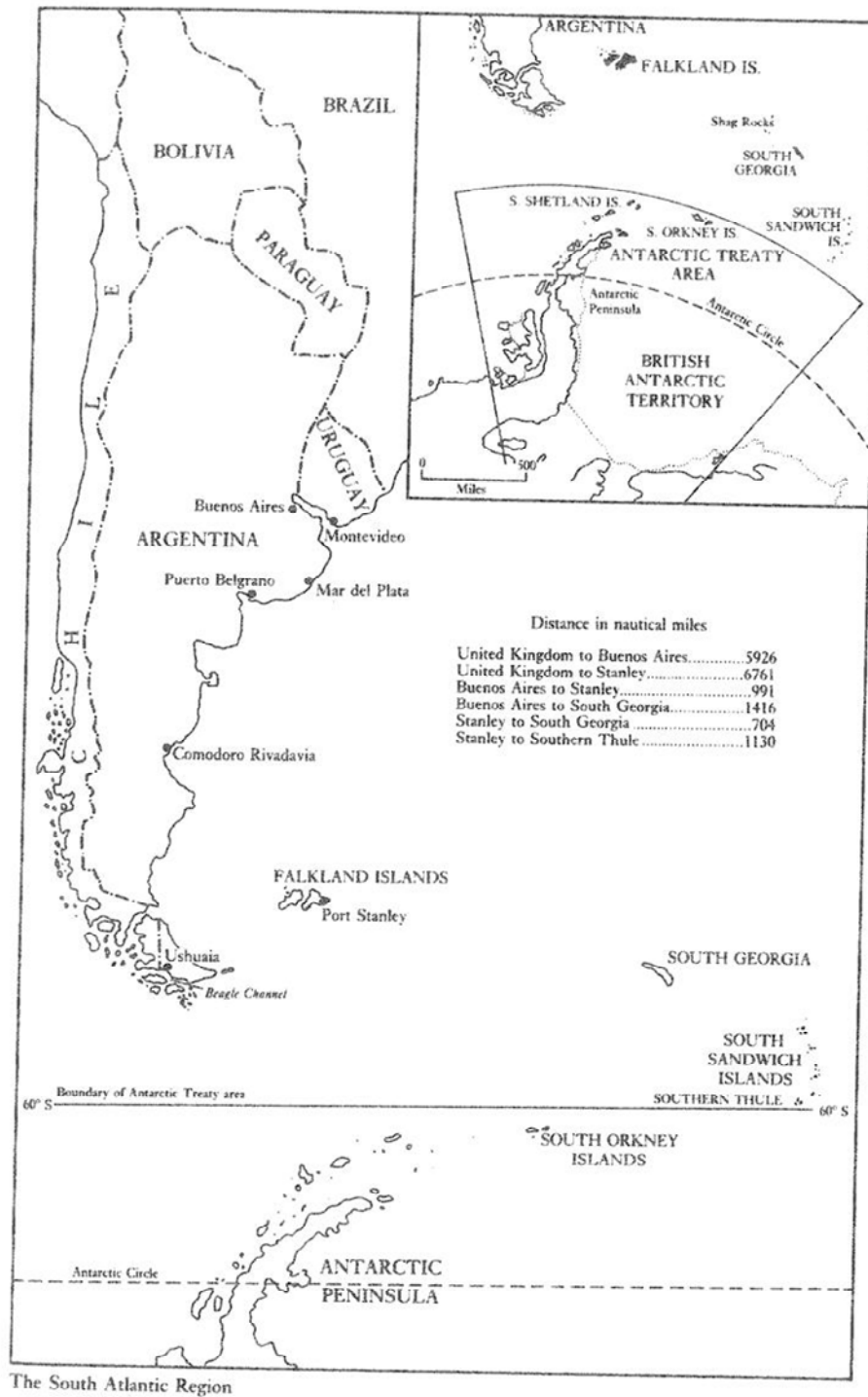


Figure 2. Geopolitical Area of Interest: The South Atlantic<sup>381</sup>

<sup>381</sup> Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), xxiii.

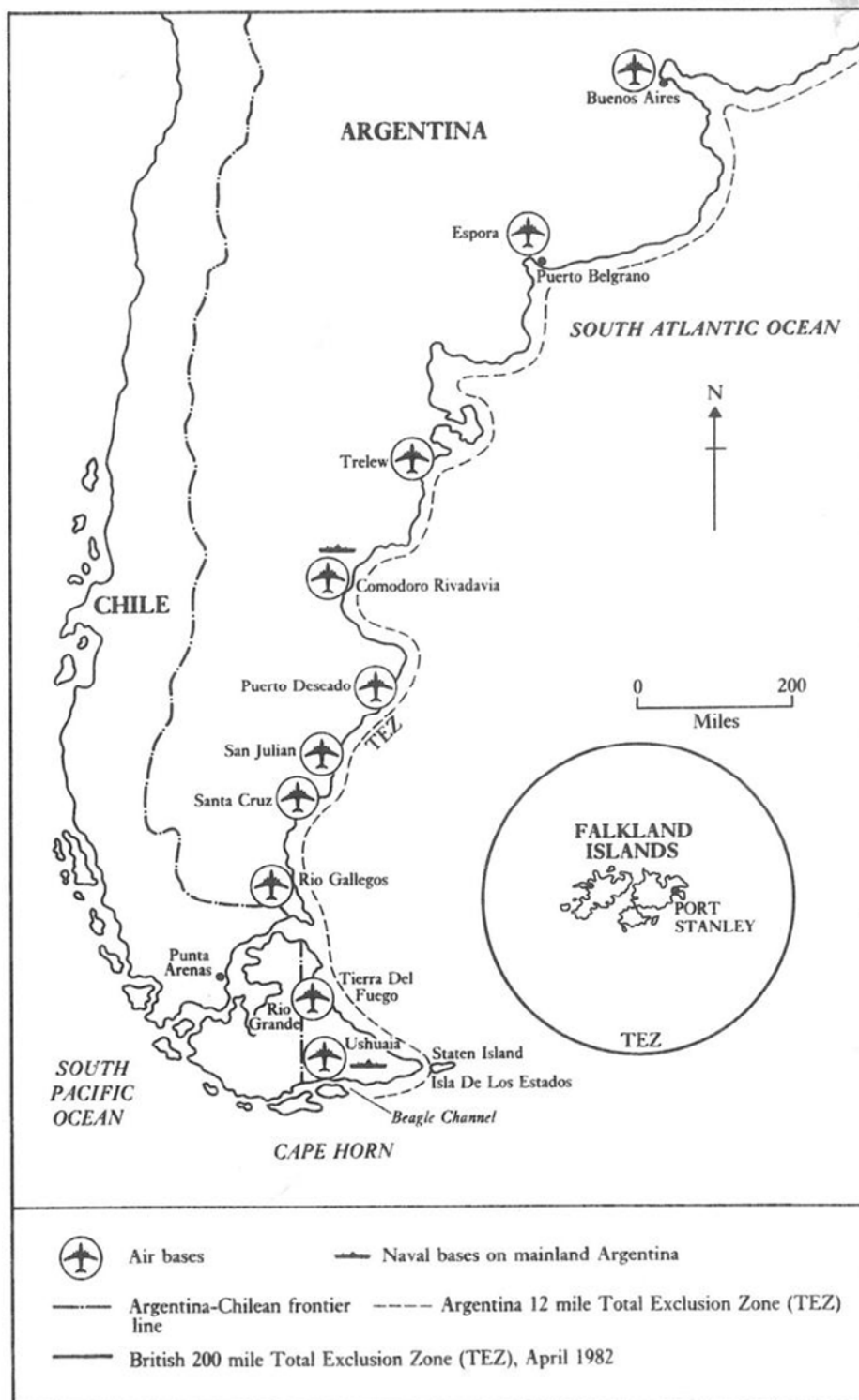


Figure 3. Argentine Military Locations<sup>382</sup>

<sup>382</sup> Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982*, xxiv.

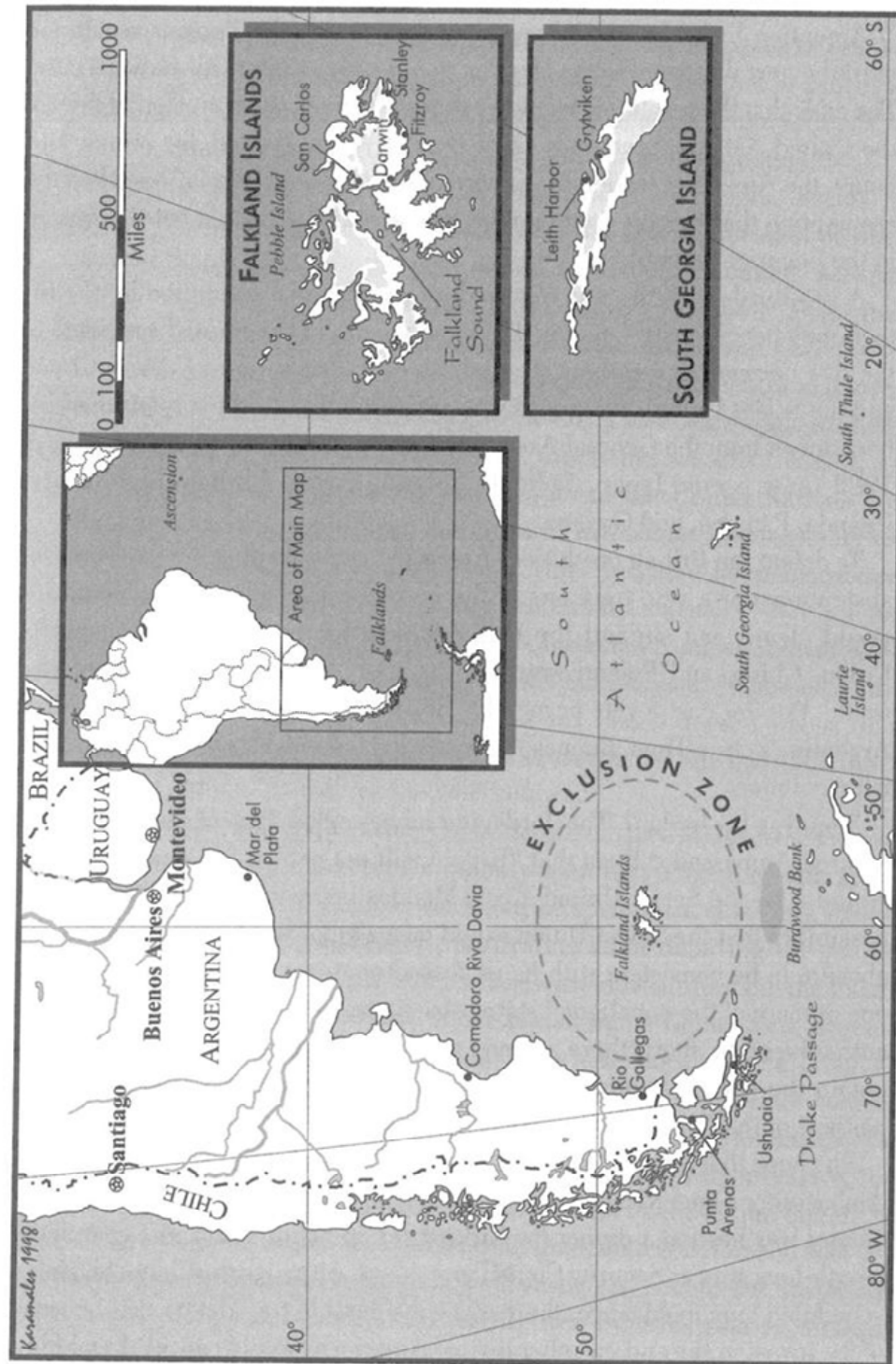


Figure 4. Close-up of Falkland Island and Dependencies<sup>383</sup>

<sup>383</sup> Richard C. Thornton, *The Falklands Sting: Reagan, Thatcher, and Argentina's Bomb*, 1st ed. (Washington: Brassey's, 1998), 133.

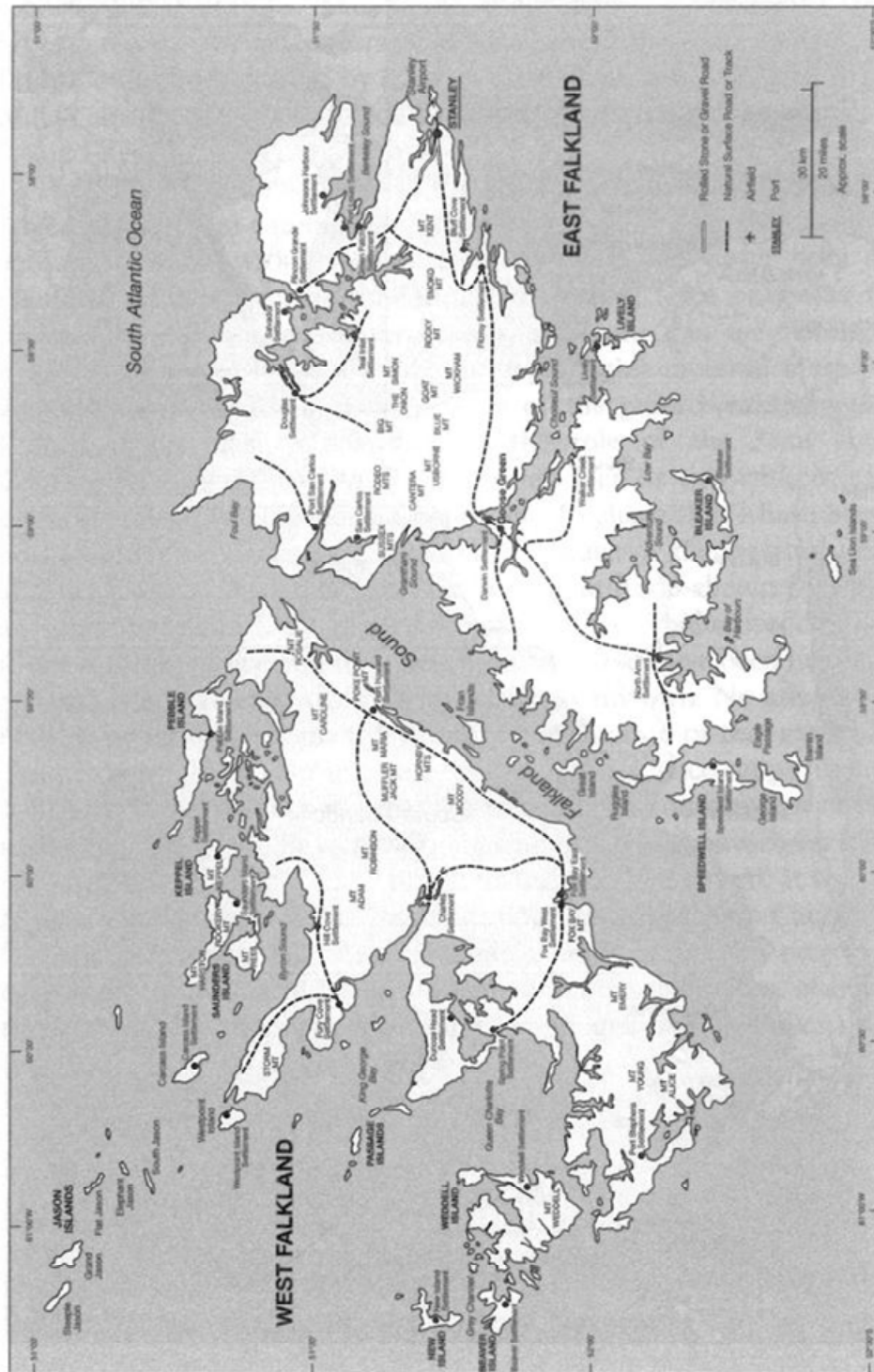


Figure 5. Falkland Islands<sup>384</sup>

<sup>384</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, xvi.



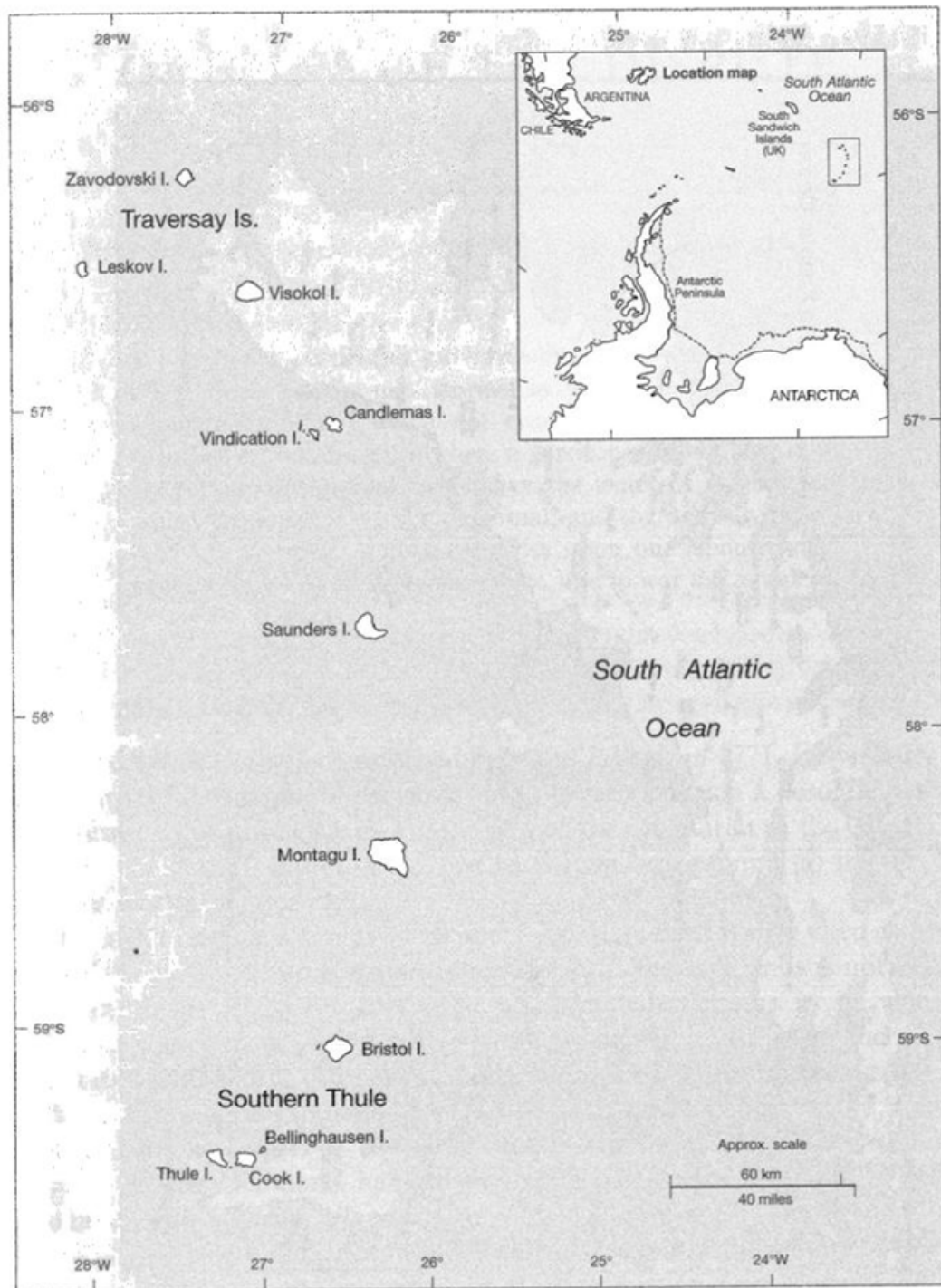


Figure 7. South Thule Island<sup>386</sup>

<sup>386</sup> Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: Vol. I*, xvii.



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